METRO / A19

Suspected gunman in killing of Ballocillo, son faces double murder raps

WORLD / A21

Russia links top exec of business empire to poisoning of Litvinenko

BUSINESS / B1

RP paying in full $220-M debt to IMF; to exit early from monitoring

ENTERTAINMENT / E4

PDI's man in Hollywood: Our most fascinating interviews of 2006

Guess who's running against Garci? It's Zuce

BIGATIN ANG MAKA-KALABAN!

By Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac

HE CERTAINLY HAS THE bulk to block the election of his Uncle Garci. And Michaelangelo Zuce, in-

GUESS/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Friday, December 29, 2006 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 21 P18 website: inquirer.net

SWS: 9 out of 10 Pinoys enter '07 with high hopes

NINETY-PERCENT OF ADULT FILIPINOS WHO experienced hunger at least once or a few times over the past three months say they are entering the New Year with hope, according to a recent survey by Social Weather Stations.

Among Filipinos whose families did not go hungry in the past three months, 91 percent say they are hopeful for the New Year.

SWS: 9 OUT OF 10/ A10

DNA test key to Janjalani ID

But brother reportedly refuses to give samples

By Dona Pazzibugan, Alcuin Papa and Julie S. Alipala

WHETHER THE DECOMPOSING BODY RETRIEVED FROM A shallow grave in Jolo the other day is that of the Philippines' most wanted terrorist leader may all boil down to whatever samples of bone, hair or teeth the grave was able to yield.

The samples are being subjected to DNA tests by experts from the United States and the Philippines to see if they belong to Khadaffy Janjalani, the elusive chieftain of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group for whose capture the US government has put up a bounty of up to $5 million—roughly P250 million.

US Embassy spokesperson Matthew Lussenhop yesterday confirmed that agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had been helping verify the remains since Wednesday "based on the request" of the Philippines as part of a long-standing cooperation on law enforcement between the two countries.

Officials said the samples would be compared with those of Janjalani's younger brother, Hector, another Abu Sayyaf member, who is held in a maximum security compound in the New

DNA TEST/ A17

'If dead, it proves RP winning war on terror'

By Christine O. Avendaño and Dona Pazzibugan

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID the death of Abu Sayyaf leader Khadaffy Janjalani, if true, would prove that the Philippines was winning the war on terror and this would please the Americans.

"It will show the success of AFP (Armed Forces) operations against the terrorists in Mindanao, especially the Abu Sayyaf," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said.

"If true (that he is dead), Janjalani is the center of gravity of terrorism in Mindanao, so that will show that we are winning in our antiterrorism campaign and even our allies, the Americans will be happy."

IF DEAD/ A17

INQUIRER PHOTO

APRIL 15, 2000: Practically then just a boy, Khadaffy Janjalani took over the Abu Sayyaf group after the death in 1998 of its founder, his oldest brother Abdurajak Abubakar.

THE GUIDING LIGHT: President Arroyo and Mike Arroyo make their way by sunlight streaming from outside the cavernously lovely Sumaging Cave in Sagada, Mountain Province. The First Couple are spending the New Year in Baguio City. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Widows, orphans of slain Abra politicos unite to fight Valeras

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BANGUED, ABRA—WIDOWS AND CHILdren of murdered political leaders in the province are forming a united opposition ticket in the May 2007 elections to fight Gov. Vicente Valera and his wife, Bangued Mayor Ma. Zita Claustro-Valera.

Charrie Bersamin, the eldest daughter of murdered Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr., said that one of the Bersamins would be running for governor against Valera, whom the police have tagged a suspect in the killing.

The congressman and his security aide, SPO1 Adelfo Ortega, were shot dead in front of the Mt. Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City, on Dec. 16.

Joy Bernos, widow of La Paz Mayor Marc Ysrael Bernos, said the group would also field a candidate either for congressman or for mayor of Bangued, the capital town.

Bernos' husband, who was killed in his hometown on Jan. 13 this year, had been the first to announce that he would challenge Valera for the gubernatorial post next year.

"I still support the previous plan of my husband and whatever … he fought for," Joy Bernos said at a joint press conference after Bersamin's burial here on Wednesday.

Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna and Lenin Benwaren, younger brother of slain Tineg Mayor Clarence Benwaren, also said that they would be fielding their own candidates against the Valeras.

But even if the lineup has still to be finalized, the members of the yet unnamed group said they would be campaigning against political killings and

WIDOWS/ A10

TAIWAN QUAKE

RP's Internet, phone capacity cut by 40%

By Riza T. Olchondra and Ronnel W. Domingo

BUDDING WEBSITE DEVELOPER ALVIN Tan was virtually unable to surf the Internet and communicate via e-mail yesterday after a 7.1 magnitude earthquake off Taiwan on Tuesday disturbed offshore submarine cables that link Asian countries with the United States and beyond.

"It's difficult because I use the Internet a lot," said Tan, who uses a dial-up connection at home.

This reporter spent the first 15 minutes of her Internet rental time just trying to reach the log-in page of her e-mail account for work.

Some 4.9 million Internet users in the Philippines were apparently experiencing similar, if not worse, connection problems since Tuesday.

Across Asia, millions of people were also enduring a second day without full Internet services.

China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and elsewhere all experienced disruptions to Internet services after the quake hit.

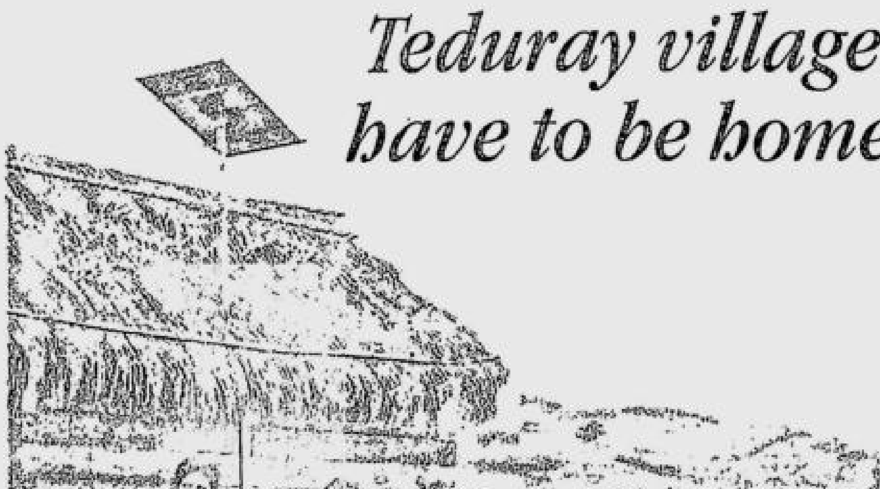
The powerful earthquake which hit Taiwan has cut Philippine telecom capacity by as much as 40 percent, an official of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) said yesterday.

NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento said some 60 percent of phone and Internet capacity was operational as carriers rerouted through other links to North America, the Middle East, Hawaii, Malaysia and Singapore.

A spokesperson for local telecom giant, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), confirmed that connectivity was down by about 40 percent.

RP'S INTERNET/ A17

Teduray villagers no longer have to be home before dark


CONGEE S GOMEZ/CONTRIBUTOR

EVENINGS BECOME ELECTRIC for the Minted family, of the Teduray hill tribe in Renti, south of Upi town in Maguindanao, who proudly pose in front of their home now powered by a 50-watt peak solar panel on the roof.

By Maria Congee S. Gomez
Contributor

ON A RECENT SATURDAY AFTERnoon in the mountain barangay of Renti, south of Upi town in Maguindanao province, a group of Teduray villagers excitedly waited as two engineers climbed up the thatched roof of the village school to put the final touches to a solar-powered electricity system that would mean a truly brighter year for them.

Long shrouded in darkness, the Teduray now enjoy electricity through solar home systems being installed in 38 of 288 households in the town under a partnership between the Philippine and United States governments and the private sector.

Upi Mayor Ramon Piang could not believe that electrification had come

TEDURAY/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Central and Southern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Visayas and Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy with rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/28/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Rains
Calapan	Rains
Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Tacloban	Rains
Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Davao	Rains

Sandigan forfeits $8 M Swiss deposit

By Norman Bordadora

THE SANDIGANBAYAN YESTERDAY ordered the forfeiture of some $8 million in Swiss bank deposits held by the former social secretary of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos in favor of the government.

The anti-graft court's First Division ruled that the multi-million-dollar bank account in the Adler Bank in Zurich, Switzerland was an ill-gotten wealth of Fe Roa-Gimenez, Malacañang's social secretary from 1981 to 1986, and her husband, Ignacio Gimenez.

The Gimenez couple are co-respondents in a number of ill-gotten wealth cases filed against the Marcos family.

The Sandiganbayan's ruling on the 20-year old ill-gotten wealth case has prevented the loss of the huge bank account by yearend.

Early this year, the Swiss Federal Supreme Court had threatened to lift the freeze order on the account if the Sandiganbayan failed to come up with a forfeiture order 20 years after it was frozen due to allegations that it was ill-gotten.

Had the freeze order been lifted, the Gimenez couple would have been free to withdraw the deposits from the account and render their recovery by the Philippine government virtually impossible.

Beating the deadline

Presidential Commission on Good Government commissioner Nicasio Conti said the ruling will be transmitted 'electronically' to the Philippine embassy in Zurich today to ensure that the government will beat the Swiss Supreme Court's Dec. 31 deadline.

"This is a very welcome development and an attestation to the commission's unrelenting effort to fulfill our mandate which is to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family and their cronies," Conti added.

The PCGG filed the forfeiture cases with the Office of the Ombudsman against the Gimenez couple in December 2001.

Roa-Gimenez was one of the Marcos family's most trusted confidantes. She reportedly earliest knew of the family's impending departure from Malacañang at the height of the People Power revolution in 1986 and was the one who started shedding and disposing of the Marcoses' confidential papers.

In December 2002, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo directed the Office of the Solicitor General to "immediately initiate" the forfeiture proceedings, after establishing probable cause that the couple's wealth had been illegally amassed.

Beyond their means

Marcelo said the respondents had "amassed wealth and assets that were beyond their lawful means of income to acquire."

He pointed out that from 1981 to 1985, Ignacio and Fe declared a total net worth of only P955,273.

The Department of Justice originally exonerated the Gimenez couple "for insufficiency of evidence."

But Marcelo included the couple, saying there was "more than reasonable ground" to believe they were also "probably guilty." He noted that the Gimenezes were close business and personal associates of the Marcoses, and that Ignacio had acted as "dummy, nominee or agent" in several transactions for Ferdinand and Imelda.

According to the PCGG, the couple had at least $3,202,736 and Deutschmark 3,093,541 deposited with account number 597510 at Adler Bank in Zurich, Switzerland under the name of G.E.I., Inc.

Pimentel joins fray, seeks probe of PLDT deal

By TJ Burgonio

SENATE MINORITY LEADER AQUILINO PImentel Jr. is seeking an inquiry into the planned sale of the government's stake in the telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. below current market price following a questionable bidding process.

Pimentel yesterday filed a resolution asking the committees on finance, and ways and means to inquire into the sale of the "blue-chip shares" under the current terms and circumstances, warning this could result in minimum P8-billion losses for the government.

The committees, he said, should dig deep into why the shares were being sold at a price much lower than the current market price to and why the bidding process wasn't transparent.

"This resolution is not intended to put everyone on the spot. We have to discuss these questions so that parties are not prejudiced, and put into so much expenses, trouble and anxiety," he said in a phone interview. "It will be to the advantage of the people if these are clarified this early."

The deal involved the sale of the sequestered shares in the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) to the foreign majority owners of PLDT at P25.2 billion. PTIC has a small stake in PLDT.

OSG presses US custody for Smith

By Armand N. Nocum

THE OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR GENeral yesterday pressed anew for the return of convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to the custody of US authorities, citing the new agreement signed between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the US Embassy which "constitutes a supervening event" that paves the way for the transfer of Smith.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney have signed an agreement for Smith to be detained at the US Embassy.

In a four-page motion, the OSG argued that the agreement between Romulo and Kenney has cured the alleged defect of the previous agreement that Makati Judge Benjamin T. Pozon used as basis to dismiss Smith's petition to be returned to the US Embassy.

Pozon had questioned the authority of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno, who have signed an earlier agreement with Kenney.

"Indeed, this agreement aptly fulfills the condition prescribed by (Pozon) in his decision and order, respectively, dated Dec. 4 and 12, 2006, thus paving the way for the immediate transfer of (Smith) from the Makati City Jail to such designated facilities," said Solicitor General Eduardo B. Nachura.

The Visiting Forces Agreement allows the US to gain custody of its servicemen facing criminal charges here so long as a formal agreement is signed between US and Philippine officials setting the condition for their detention.

The new agreement provides that Smith is to be detained at the first floor of the Rowe Building of the US Embassy "in a room approximately 10 x 12 square feet" and "guarded round the clock."

Nachura said the new agreement between Romulo and Kenney "constitutes a supervening event that even more warrants the issuance of a temporary restraining order and/or writ of preliminary injunction against the continuous of (Smith) at the Makati City Jail."

The OSG then asked the CA to "immediately order the transfer of (Smith) to the designated facilities under the agreement dated Dec. 22, 2006 without prejudice to the final resolution of the issue at bar."

The DFA, through the OSG, earlier sought the immediate transfer of Smith to US authorities pending the final resolution of his case in court.

But the CA on Wednesday simply "noted" the manifestation.

In its urgent manifestation, the OSG asked the appellate court to order the immediate return of the 21-year-old US Marine who was convicted of raping a 23-year-old Filipina to the custody of the US Embassy.

Citing the provision of the VFA, Nachura said the custody of any US personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with US military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings.

"The US authority retains such custody until all judicial proceedings against Smith shall have terminated, except when the US authorities themselves, in the meantime, revoke it," Nachura said, even as he lamented that Pozon unjustly assumed and exercised this prerogative of revocation despite the pending judicial proceedings.

Blast rocks Sultan Kudarat dep't store; 3 hurt

TACURONG, SULTAN KUDARAT—A suspected homemade bomb exploded inside a crowded department store here yesterday, wounding three people and setting off a security alarm, officials said.

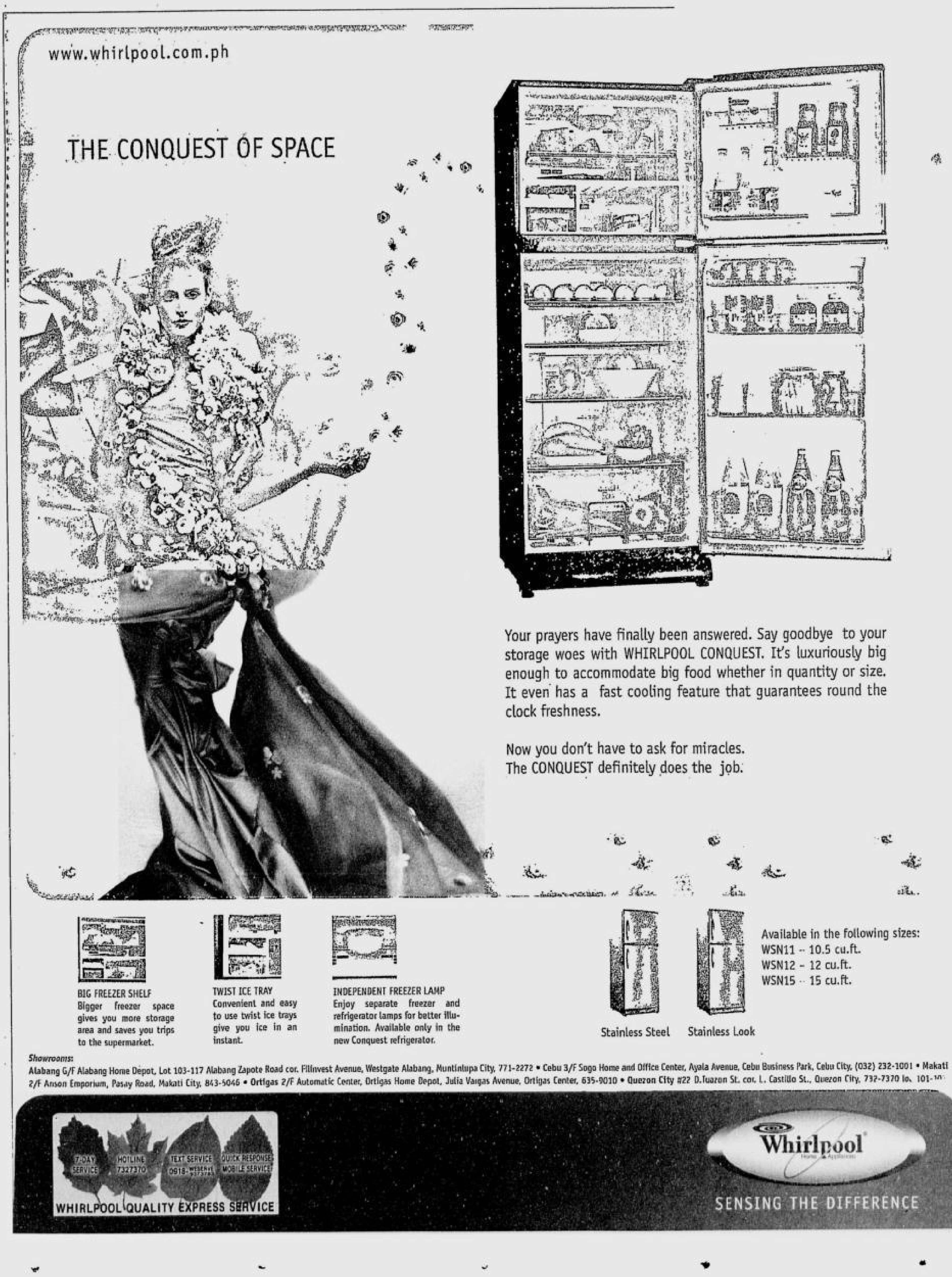
The explosion happened in a counter where shoppers deposit their bags and packages at the Kim San Plaza in the city's commercial district, said Col. Vicente Porto, commander of the Army's 102nd Infantry Brigade based in General Santos City.

The wounded, apparently shoppers, were taken to a hospital for treatment, said Chief Superintendent German Doria, the city police chief. He said he had ordered security to be tightened in all malls and public areas in Sultan Kudarat to thwart any bomb plots by al-Qaida-linked terrorists and other armed groups.

Imelda Lorenzo, 43, one of the injured shoppers, said she and her two children had just gotten to the store when the explosion occurred.

"It was so powerful, I thought the building would collapse," said Lorenzo who was momentarily deafened by the explosion.

According to Sultan Kudarat Gov. Pax Mangudadatu, investigators have found out that the bomb, concealed in a bag, was left by a man at the baggage counter shortly before the 2:45 p.m. explosion.



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Media groups sue Mike Arroyo over libel suits

ABOUT 40 JOURNALISTS, PRESS groups and news groups filed a P12.5 million class action suit Thursday against President Gloria Arroyo's husband, claiming his libel suits against them violated press freedom.

The class action, the first in Philippine press history, was filed in suburban Makati city against Jose Miguel Arroyo in retaliation to his filing libel complaints earlier this year against 43 journalists and publications.

"The class action suit...argues that the (libel) suits have not only caused the respondents sleepless nights; they also have a chilling effect on press freedom," said the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, one of the groups that instigated the suit. Others involved are the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) and The Daily Tribune, as well as 36 print journalists, including Philippine Daily Inquirer columnists Ramon Tulfo and Conrado de Quiros.

"...Despite [Arroyo's] knowledge that as a public figure, he is open to fair comment and reporting on his public life, [he] continues to harass [complainants] with a barrage of malicious libel suits, regardless of the limitations that [they] observed in writing their articles," said the 20-page complaint.

Marites Vitug, editor of Newsbreak magazine, said the damages they were seeking were "symbolic" and that they only wanted to prevent others from following the example of First Gentleman Arroyo, popularly known as "Mike."

Arroyo's "shotgun approach" in filing libel cases intended to attack the entire profession, not just individual journalists, she added.

Lawyer for the journalists, Harry Roque, said it was clear that Arroyo had filed so many libel suits to stifle journalists exercising the freedom of the press, rather than just to protect his name.

On the other hand, Jesus Santos, lawyer for Mike Arroyo, said he welcomed the class action and quoted the president's husband as saying, "see you in court."

"How can it be a curtailment of press freedom when the law accords him that right" to sue for libel, Santos asked.

"The First Gentleman respects the right of media people to sue him so they should also respect his right to defend his honor through legal means," the lawyer said.

Roque said he expected the case to be long and drawn out.

President Arroyo's term ends in 2010. She has battled charges of election fraud and corruption, while her husband has been accused by some journalists and the political opposition of using his position to enrich himself. *Tarra V. Quismundo, AFP*

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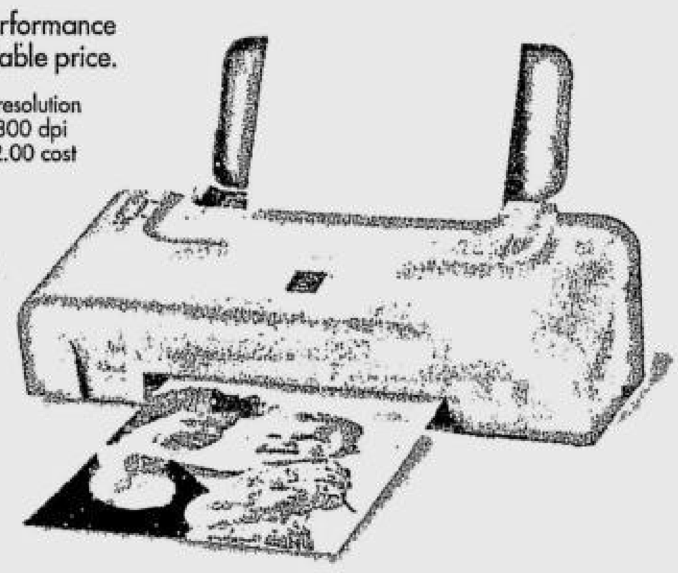

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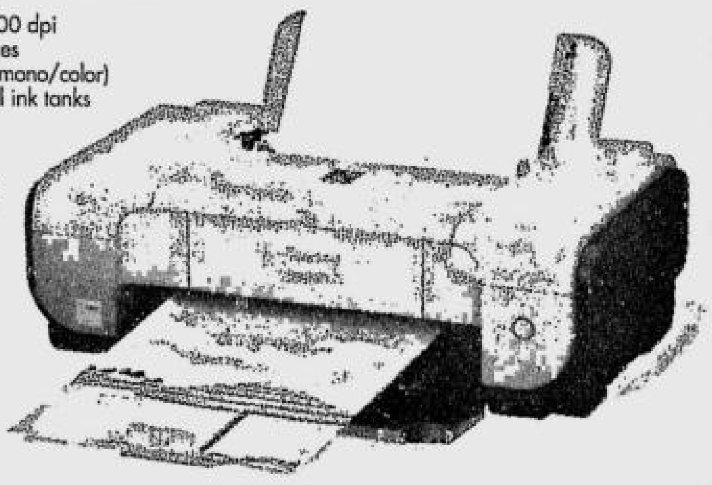

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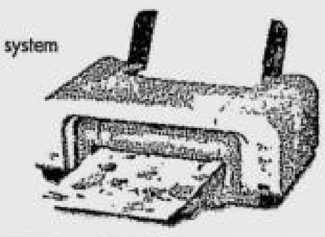

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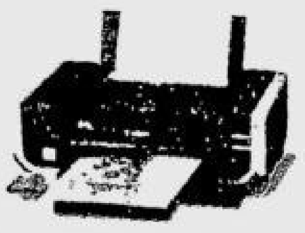

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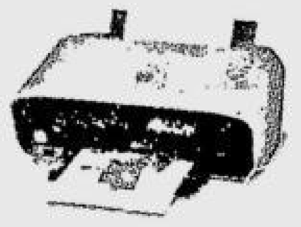

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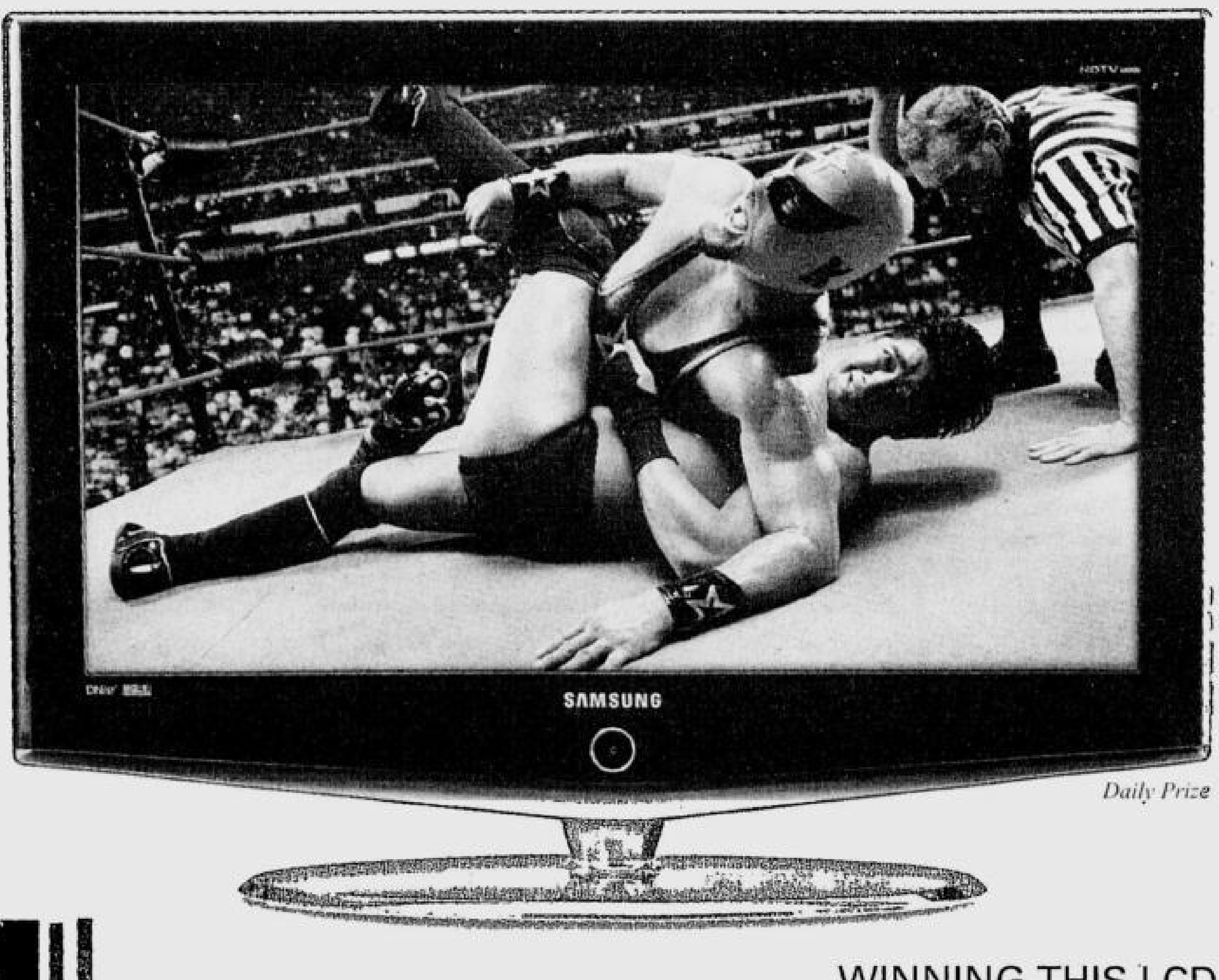

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Palace says it can live with old budget

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 26 issue, a story published on Page A13 of the Across the Nation section—"Bong Pineda wife's gov bid Palace-backed, says militant"—misspelled the surname of a controversial "jueteng" witness. It should have read Michaelangelo Zuce—not Suze.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front-page story—"Singapore police alert RP on stolen aviation fuel"—erroneously converted the dimensions of six pails of jet fuel which disappeared from an oil storage facility in Singapore. The pails' height of 50 cm is equivalent to about one foot and eight inches—not four feet and two inches. The diameter, 38 cm, is equivalent to one foot and three inches—not three feet and two inches.

* * *

ANOTHER front-page story in the same issue—"Palace: From 'Hello Garci' to 'Vote Garci'"—misstated that Rep. Nereus Acosta is an administration congressman. He is a Liberal Party congressman.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

BICAMERAL CONFERENCE COMMITtee negotiations on the 2007 national budget are deadlocked over the slashing of a P4.4 billion school feeding allocation by the Senate, which suspects it to be part of the administration's election war chest.

But Malacañang is digging in. In a briefing,Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said they were ready to make do with a reenacted budget for the third straight year if the Senate insists on cutting out this school-based rice distribution program.

"The one kilo of rice given to each student is just a conduit to give the food to the hungry. We can't let them go hungry and stop this program just because the opposition thinks it's for the elections," said Ermita.

"If there is really nothing we can do about it, we can live with a reenacted budget," he declared.

Since 2004, the Arroyo administration had been running on an old budget of P907.56 billion a year due to the opposition from the Senate. The proposed 2007 budget is P1.6 trillion.

Franklin Drilon, chair of the Senate finance committe, has said the upper chamber is not inclined to agree to the demand of their counterparts in the House of Representatives that the controversial allocation for the Department of Education (DepEd) rice distribution program be restored.

"I cannot see how distributing uncooked rice will address the nutritional needs of our school children. This program will only benefit the already filthy rich importers and their patrons in government whose pockets will again be lined up for fat commissions," Drilon had said in a statement.

The Senate proposed that the rice money instead be used by DepEd to build more classrooms and hire more teachers.

Meanwhile, Education Secretary Jesli Lapuz said that the President had been able to undertake pump-priming programs this year despite working on an old budget. "She used interest savings from our improved fiscal program and she might use the same for the school feeding program," said Lapuz.

Lapuz said the school feeding program had been the "most efficient" in bringing food directly to the hungry Filipinos. "How can they (senators) say this if for the election when we are only implementing this in the ten poorest provinces in the country?

Health Secretary Francisco Duque argued that the program was not only being implemented in an election year, but has been in place since 2001.

Drilon, however, noted that the school feeding program in the past, which involved dairy products and food supplements, was not the same as the one listed in the budget proposal. The present program involving rice distribution was started only in 2006.

Cops ban use of bazooka-like PVC 'boga'

By Alcuin Papa and Christine Avendaño

POLICE HAVE BANNED THE USE of "PVC boga," an improvised noisemaker popular with Metro Manilans during the New Year celebrations.

"An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure," said Metro Manila police chief Director Reynaldo Varilla who announced the ban yesterday.

"Let us welcome the New Year with hope and let's give importance to our health and well-being rather than throwing it away on firecrackers," he said.

Varilla cited statistics that showed that most of the injured in firecracker-related incidents were users of the "PVC boga."

"PVC boga" is a bazooka-like device with a trigger. It is made of PVC pipes and uses denatured alcohol as the incendiary element. It costs from P300 to P800.

Malacañang yesterday added its voice to the warnings against the use of the boga, asking the public to refrain from using it in the rundown to New Year's Day.

"In the name of public safety and public welfare, I think we need to remind strongly the authorities and parents about the use of boga," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

But he said it might be too late to push for local governments to issue an ordinance prohibiting its use.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III told a Palace news conference that the number of fireworks-related injuries during Dec. 21 to Dec. 26 surged 122 percent, against the same period last year.

The Department of Health has so far recorded 173 fireworks-related injuries, including ingestion of *watusi* and stray bullets, he said.

Together with another type of pyrotechnic called the "picolo," the "boga" made up almost 50 percent of these injuries, he said.

But so far there have been no fatalities reported from the use of boga, Duque said.

Duque said he has discussed with Philippine National Police Chief Director General Oscar Calderon on the possibility of the PNP confiscating the improvised cannon.

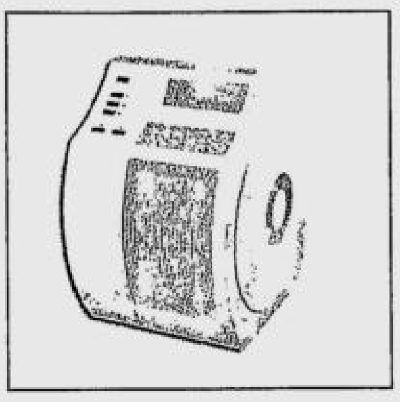
He believes Section 3 of Republic Act No. 7183 empowers the PNP to determine which kinds of these devices could be considered injurious and thus allow the police to confiscate them.

"This is actually being studied right now," he said.

Varilla ordered the commanders of the five police districts in Metro Manila to "strictly implement" the ban on the boga.

With a report from Nancy Carvajal

clean air at home



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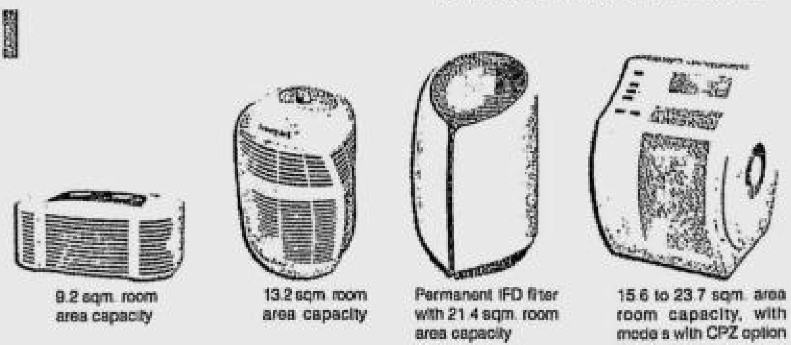

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Pollution Kills
2 Million People a Year
- World Health Organization

Honeywell Heeds Call for Air Quality Improvement

In a worldwide statement last October 5, 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) has concluded that pollution is a major cause of premature deaths of over 2 Million people a year, thus the call for urgent concern and action to improve air quality especially in cities.

In fact, a joint study by the WHO and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has claimed Manila to be one of 20 cities where air pollution is posing increasingly serious health problems to its residents. Evidence of such occurrences includes increased prevalence of asthma, allergies, pneumonia, lung cancer, chronic respiratory, circulatory and other systemic ailments among Filipino children and adults. The Department of Health (DOH) also disclosed that major pollution hotspots are concentrated along major roads and dense traffic networks, thus, many people seek a place of safety such as their homes, to avoid outdoor air pollution.

However, the struggle for clean air does not stop at home.

The truth is that indoor-air pollution is often worse than outdoor air pollution. Major causes of this would include poor room ventilation, faulty equipment and appliances, outdoor cigarette dust and smoke that come in and stay indoors. A report made by the US Environment Protection Agency (EPA), states that indoor air pollution can be two to five times higher than levels outdoors, and ranked indoor air pollution as a top public health concern. This is so since an enclosed indoor environment causes a decrease in air quality as less ventilation occurs. In fact, airborne contaminants that can be harmful to one's health are trapped and even re-circulated in the room.

In the wake of such alarming reports, it has become increasingly important to protect one's self and loved ones from the harmful dangers of air pollution, thus, making Honeywell (a world-wide recognized forerunner in home-environment products), answer the call for better air quality. Recently, Honeywell introduced in the Philippines an array of air purifiers with varying filtering efficiencies and area coverage capacities to suit the public's different needs and requirements.

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'Bata' takes up tax break offer

By Cynthia D. Balana

PHILIPPINE BILLIARD KING, EFREN "BATA" Reyes, yesterday availed himself of the Improved Voluntary Assessment Program (IVAP) of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and opted to settle his existing tax liabilities with the government.

Reyes came to the office of BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag to personally file his application for IVAP.

The IVAP, which ends on Dec. 29, allows the taxpayers to avail themselves of the privilege of last priority in audit and enables the government to maximize revenue collections with the least administrative costs.

Reyes, a former world pool champion and a member of the sport's Hall of Fame, has also other sources of income from abroad which has been subjected to tax in the previous years.

Buñag said the IVAP seeks to maintain harmonious relation between BIR and taxpayers by doing away with investigation of cooperative taxpayers.

IVAP applies to all internal revenue taxes covering taxable years ending Dec. 31, 2005 and fiscal year ending on any day not later than June 30, 2006 and all prior years, including one-time transactions such as estate tax, donor's tax, capital gains tax, final withholding tax, expanded withholding tax and documentary stamp tax on the transfer, sale, exchange, or disposition of assets. The program also covers taxpayers enjoying preferential tax treatment.

On the BIR's Abatement Program, Buñag further extended to Jan. 31, 2007 the deadline for its availment to give a chance to qualified taxpayers to apply for the program.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 29, 2006
5th Day in the Octave of Christmas
Thomas Becket

1st Reading:	**1 Jn 2:3-11**
Gospel:	**Luke 2:22-35**

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, they brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying,

"Now, O Lord, you can dismiss
your servant in peace,
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel."

His father and mother wondered at what was said about the child. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "See him; he will be for the rise or fall of the multitudes of Israel. He shall stand as a sign of contradiction, while a sword will pierce your own soul. Then the secret thoughts of many may be brought to light."

Commentary

Do we know Jesus? Do we keep his word/commands to us? There is only one commandment, realized in Jesus, the only light of the world—that we are to love one another. Are we in union with God, in Jesus, or do we succumb to the fears of the world and continue to hate, to fear and to walk in the shadows? Jesus, first-born of Mary is brought to the temple to be given in sacrifice and dedication to God and they are met by Simeon who has long awaited the coming of the light into Israel. He rejoices that he has seen the light but as a prophet he also sees that this Child will be the cause of the rise and fall of many in Israel and the world. Is this Child the cause of our rise, or our downfall?

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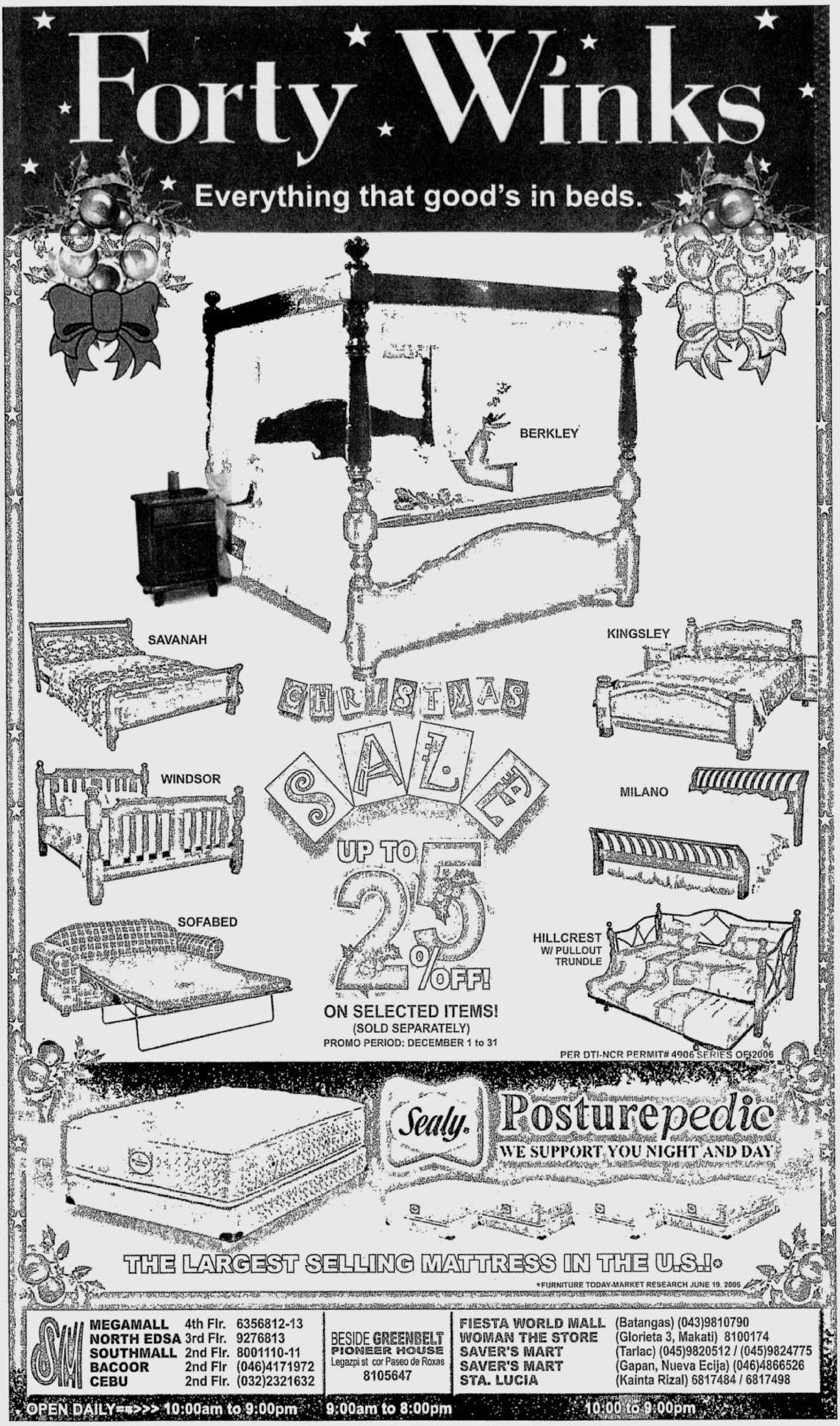
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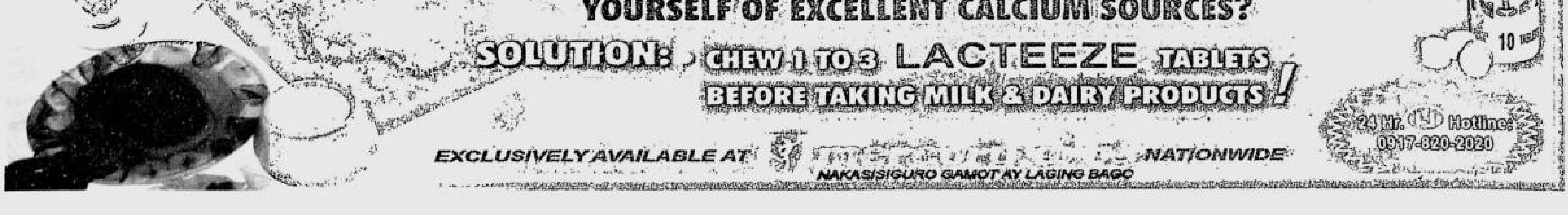
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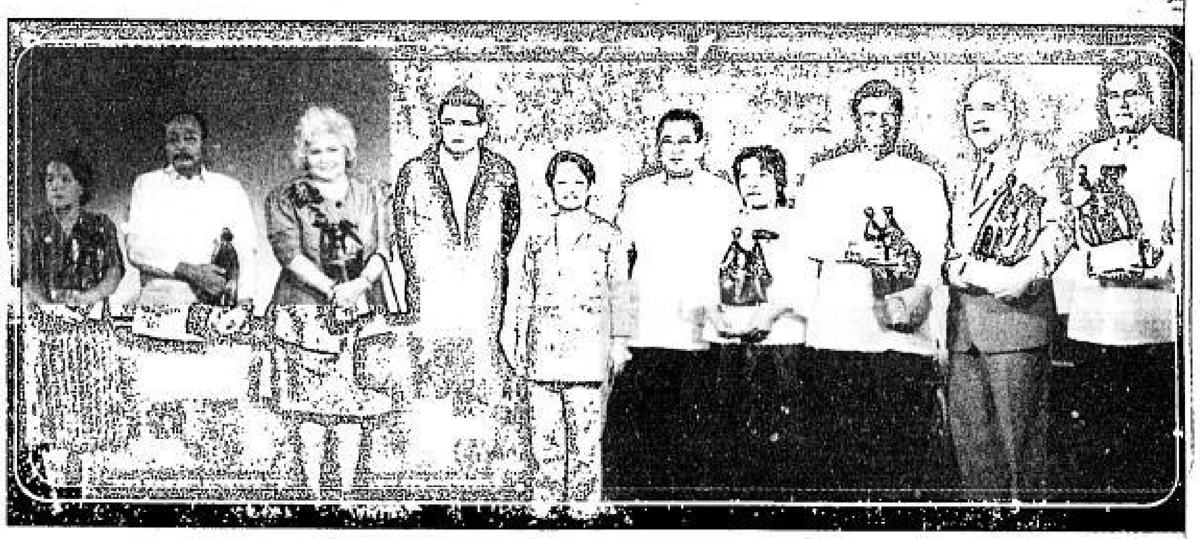

Go Negosyo for OFWs

The Entrepreneurship Revolution

2006 has seen many changes in the entrepreneurship landscape. In our own small way, Go Negosyo is glad to have witnessed and enabled these changes. Thanks to the support and guidance of self-made Filipino entrepreneurs and companies, the Government, and the banking sector, more and more Filipinos have ventured into setting up their own businesses.

Special mention go out to the Go Negosyo Panelists and Mentors who have generously devoted their time, talent and know-how to thousands of would-be entrepreneurs. Without a doubt, their passion, valuable advice and mentoring have created such an impact not only to those who seek their counsel but also to the Entrepreneuship Revolution.

To the Go Negosyo Mentors, our deepest thanks! Let's keep the fire burning!

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A successful 2006 has passed for GoNegosyo. Now, we invite you to come and be part of another year of entrepreneurship this 2007. Watch out for our events and projects this coming year as we go out and provide more information and assistance for budding entrepreneurs.

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  March 2 to 4, 2007
- GoNegosyo Caravan in
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- Fashion Negosyo
  3rd Quarter of 2007

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Huwag kalimutan panoorin ang GoNegosyo tuwing Lunes sa RPN 9, 10:30 -11:30 PM.

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PAF chopper crashes; others may be grounded

By Julie S. Alipala and Joselle Badilla
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A PHILIPPINE AIR Force assault helicopter crashed during an emergency landing Thursday morning at the Zamboanga International Airport, slightly injuring two pilots, officials said.

The pilots of the rocket-firing MG520 helicopter, which is used in counter-insurgency operations, were on a routine maintenance mission at the military air base here, and were about 10 feet up in the air when their main propeller blades snapped off for still unclear reasons, officials said.

Air Force spokesperson Maj. Augusto dela Peña said an investigation was under way and the Air Force might decide to ground at least 15 other US-made MG520s if it is shown that the accident was caused by a mechanical defect.

Celso Bayabos, Air Transportation Office chief, said the two pilots—Capt. Jocelyn Patrimonio and 1Lt. Vicentino Quirante—sustained minor bruises in the crash that occurred around 8:15 a.m. They were immediately rushed to the Western Mindanao Command Hospital.

The crash delayed air traffic for over an hour. A commercial flight from Manila was diverted to the central province of Cebu, but was later allowed to land after the runway was cleared. The military chopper was a total wreck.

Col. Reynaldo Ramirez, commander of the PAF's 3rd Tactical Operations Wing, said he believes there was nothing wrong with the 16-year-old helicopter. "The accident [may have been] caused by human factors or error," he said.

The crash was the first here although some MG520s have plunged to the ground in the past.

With wire reports

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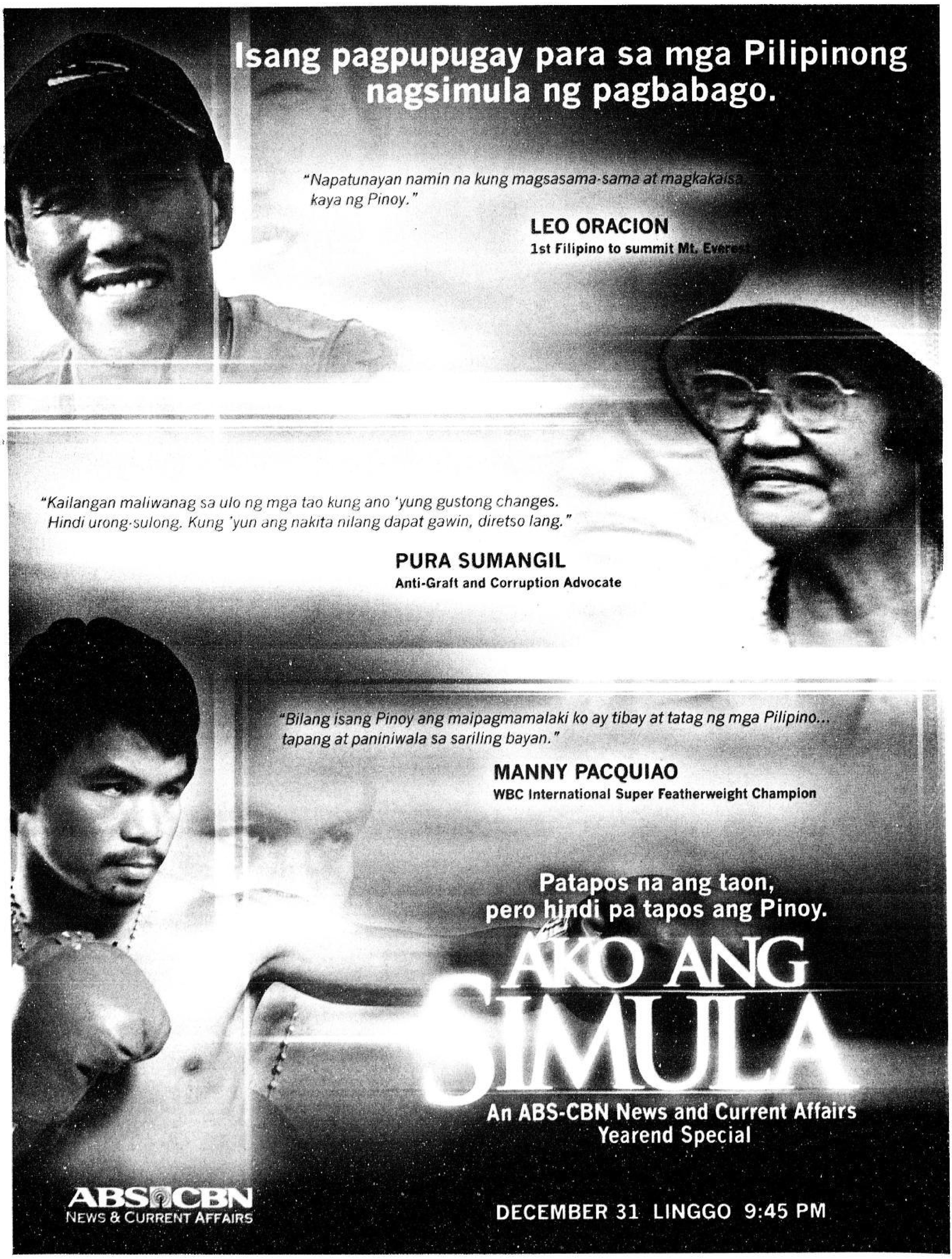
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Guess who's running against Garci?

From page A1

tends to do just that.

Though he does not have the political clout of his kin and former boss, former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, Zuce told the INQUIRER yesterday he would run against him for a seat in Congress from the first district of Bukidnon.

The other day, Malacañang minced no words in throwing its support behind Garcillano.

Pity Bukidnon

The self-confessed election operator corroborated allegations of electoral fraud against President Macapagal-Arroyo and Garcillano during hearings at the Senate last year.

Zuce said he pities the first district of Bukidnon if Garcillano wins.

"I have decided to run," said the former election official in an interview over the ANC news channel yesterday, confirming what he had earlier told the INQUIRER.

"Who'd believe him (if he wins and takes a seat in Congress)? He's just running for election to achieve a certain level of immunity (from suit)," Zuce said.

"Even our governor doesn't believe him. He has another candidate for congressman despite being allied with the administration," he added.

Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri has already said that he would support the three-term provincial board member, Ben Pancrudo, instead of Garcillano.

With opposition

Zuce said he'd naturally be running with the opposition as Garcillano is expected to run under either the Lakas or Kampi party of the Arroyo administration. He said he has already spoken to personalities representing the United Opposition.

"Let's keep them secret for now," Zuce said.

GARCILLANO: Soft loans for small farmers

ZUCE: Pity Bukidnon

The Acostas

The mother of oppositionist Bukidnon First District Rep. Nereus Acosta, is expected to contest the congressional seat. Her son, who's with the Liberal Party Drilon faction, is now on his last term.

"But Ma'am Socorro may already be too old. She might no longer have what it takes to mount an effective campaign," Zuce said.

"That's (another reason) why I want to run; to pose a serious challenge to Garci's candidacy," he added.

"I grew up in Bukidnon. I'm from Barangay Poblacion in Malitbug," Zuce said in a telephone interview.

"Our district is a very peaceful place. If he runs, there will be political turmoil," he added.

In 2005, Zuce testified at the Senate that he was on the staff of then presidential political liaison Joey Rufino in 2004 and he witnessed the distribution of thousands of pesos to election regional directors at Ms Arroyo's residence in Quezon City.

He added that Garcillano was engaged by Malacañang to enlist the help of regional election officers for the 2004 polls.

Garcillano had admitted talking on the phone with Ms Arroyo at the height of the canvassing of votes in the last presidential election, but both denied committing any wrongdoing.

Key witness

Zuce was expected to be a key witness in the first impeachment case against Ms Arroyo in 2005.

He, however, surprised many when he surfaced in 2006 this time with the Arroyo administration's antigambling czar Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Zuce, nonetheless, didn't take back any of the accusations he leveled against Ms Arroyo and Garcillano.

"I just don't want Garcillano to become congressman of our place. That would be a pity," Zuce said.

"If he is not disqualified, why not?" replied Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita when asked if the administration party alliance would accept Garcillano as its candidate in the coming polls.

"I'm not sure if he is with Lakas or Kampi, both of which are in the alliance. But it's not difficult to know if you are Garcillano what party you will run under," Ermita added.

Garcillano's friend, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., told the INQUIRER yesterday that Garcillano had long wanted to join politics.

"He's running," said Pichay who disclosed that former election official would join the administration slate in Bukidnon opposite the Acostas.

Garcillano said he had been going around, asking municipal mayors about his chances of getting elected "if I would throw my hat in the political arena, and some of them (said), 'it's probably a good thing that you decided to run.'"

Projects

Already, the political wannabe for the most powerful elective post in his district has lined up projects for his would-be constituents.

"I have already lined up things that I would do specially in (an) area where agricultural production is predominant. I would like soft loans for the small farmers who would not be able to finance their production," he said.

Garcillano owns a farm in Baungon town where he and his wife Grace have since found solace following the "Hello, Garci" wiretapping scandal that, he said, almost ruined his life and nearly cost Ms Arroyo the presidency.

Garcillano said he also wanted to educate his constituents, particularly on farming, and give their farm produce easy access to the markets.

Ping: Run, Garci, run

By TJ Burgonio

OPPOSITION SEN. PANFILO LACSON, who filed charges against ex-Comelec commissioner Virgilio Garcillano with 19 congressmen, welcomed his candidacy, saying this would keep him busy from carrying out fraud in the senatorial elections.

"That could be a blessing in disguise to my colleagues in the opposition. He will be tied up in Bukidnon; he won't be able to operate on a national level. In the end, we will be thanking him," he said over dzBB. "So I can only say: 'Run Garci run.'"

But Lacson's colleagues are taking Garcillano's challenge seriously. They are out to beat him in the May 2007 national elections.

Common candidate

The opposition's consensus is that it should field a common candidate against Garcillano.

Tagged as the brains of the alleged fraud in the 2004 presidential vote, Garcillano has Malacañang's backing as Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita admitted on Tuesday.

"Our game plan is to prevent cheating, and if possible, to support one candidate," Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, Liberal Party member, said in a phone interview when asked about the coalition's strategy against a Garcillano candidacy.

He said the party would solidly back its own candidate in Garcillano's district, and expected other parties in the coalition to do the same, a view shared by Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, another LP stalwart.

"The game plan is to support our LP bet in the district and hope that with the help of the vigilance of the media, we will succeed in keeping the contest free and fair," Pangilinan said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

Biazon, however, said that it couldn't stop its coalition partners from fielding their own candidates in Bukidnon's first district, a situation that could divide votes and hurt their chances of defeating the administration candidate, like Garcillano.

"I think the other parties, if they don't have their own candidates, will support our candidate. But you know how complicated local politics is. We can't ask other parties not to field their own. But it's much better if we only have one candidate [against Garci]," he said.

Coalition talks

The LP wing of Sen. Franklin Drilon has been holding talks with Senate President Manuel Villar Jr.'s Nacionalista Party, former President Joseph Estrada's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay's PDP-Laban, among others, for some time now for a possible coalition in 2007.

The coalition intends to field a common slate of senators, and if possible local candidates, against the administration ticket in next year's mid-term elections which is seen as a referendum on the administration's legitimacy.

The Palace's declaration of support for Garcillano came on the heels of the Department of Justice's dismissal of perjury and falsification of passport charges against him for lack of merit. This was the case filed by Lacson and 19 others.

Teduray villagers no ...

From page A1

to his town in rural Maguindanao. It was almost impossible to give the mountain communities power in the past as they are too remote and inaccessible to be connected to the power grid.

Piang is sure there would be changes in their lives even though some Teduray elders fear what this would mean for their cultural traditions.

Some of the Teduray families were already talking of hanging Christmas lights for the first time this year. They planned more get-togethers and were excited about karaoke, which they associate with sing-along feasts.

Hill people

The peace-loving Teduray are a hill tribe people living in the densely forested hills of the Cotabato Cordillera in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces. They are a farming, hunting and gathering people known for their skill in basket-weaving. Though many have had close contact with the Christian and Muslim lowlanders, as well as with American missionaries since the beginning of the century, a large number still retain and practice their indigenous customs and rituals.

They are sometimes referred to in texts as Tiruray, which can be annoying to some of the members. They want this corrected to Teduray, the ethnic grouping that they have been known for generations.

The remoteness of their homeland's location has cut the Teduray off from the mainstream. Basic social services are so rare that many children say they have never seen a doctor. Their agricultural practices have not improved, remaining stuck in slash-and-burn farming. The rate of new births has increased alarmingly in the past five years. It is not unusual to see a household with seven to 12 children.

Unimaginable

The electricity system is being installed under the Alliance for Mindanao Off-grid Renewable Energy (Amore) program of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Energy, Mirant Phil. Foundation, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and Winrock Int'l.

Solar modules installed on rooftops convert sunlight into direct current that is stored in batteries. Each household is provided with a 50- or 20-watt battery capable of powering two or three light bulbs under a five-year lease agreement. A fixed rate of P320 is collected quarterly. Failure to pay the rent for three consecutive billing periods would lead to the confiscation of the battery.

For Emmie Minted, having electricity is unimaginable. She groped for words to describe how she felt. As early as 5 p.m., she switched on the two light bulbs in her house, one of which hung from the edge of the roof outside her hut. Her children were happy as they could now stay up later and be able to play more.

The 40-year-old mother of eight and new grandmother has many plans. She wants a black-and-white, second-hand TV so she and her family can watch their favorite movie stars.

"But I know this might take some time, as I need to save for it first," she said.

Emmie's immediate priority was to hang Christmas lights and simple decorations. She planned to host a feast, serving *teneuer* (glutinous rice) wrapped in *rekek* leaves and cooked in bamboo tubes, and a special homemade cake.

Form of birth control

Rudy, Emmie's older brother who is the barangay chair of Renti, was no less excited.

"This could possibly open doors for more assistance programs. On a personal level, there will be more meetings in my house," Rudy said in Filipino.

Rudy entertained visitors from neighboring villages until well past midnight, huddling under the soft beam of electric light. His wife Flor dashed about, preparing a hot stew of chicken in coconut milk while looking in on their 2-month-old baby lying in a cloth hammock.

Rudy said the Teduray are extremely marginalized. The children normally walk to school as early as 4 a.m. and then have to rush everything in the afternoon to take advantage of available light. Sleeping hours are as early as 6 p.m.

He said electricity could be a form of birth control.

The Teduray also celebrate the Christmas season, though maybe not in as festive a mood as their Christian neighbors. There will be food for the midnight dinner. They also dress up for the occasion. They visit family in nearby villages, but these visits last no more than half an hour as they have to be home before dark.

But with the lights having been switched on in Renti, the season will be brighter and the gatherings prolonged in Rudy's house.

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Customs bureau expects to meet P196-B goal today

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS expects to meet its P196 billion overall target collection today, the last working day of the year, and hopes to post surplus income as well.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales yesterday said the bureau would receive about P4 billion in cash and non-cash revenue to meet the P196 billion goal.

Morales said he expects to officially post today the P3 billion in cash payments from two big oil companies Petron and Shell.

Petron is expected to pay P2 billion worth of taxes and duties, while Shell will pay about P1 billion.

The P3 billion will complete the bureau's cash target of P190 billion.

Morales also said the bureau expects to receive a P1 billion Special Allotment Release Order from the Department of Budget and Management.

The amount would complete the BOC's P6 billion non-cash target revenue of the BOC. The non-cash collections come from the taxes on the importation of government agencies.

Aside from the P4 billion expected revenue, the bureau's other collection districts are also expected to remit their income and possibly pull up the BOC's collections.

"We expect to meet the target with these payments. By tomorrow (Friday), we will also be getting surplus collections," Morales told reporters in a press briefing.

The customs commissioner also said he has been trying to meet three targets.

The first target is the P196 billion set by the government. The second is the P197 internal target that he set for himself when he took over the BOC in January.

The third and most difficult to reach was the P200 billion target set by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, who said 200 was an easier figure to remember.

GMA launches Mike D Senate bid

By Christine O. Avendano

DEFENSOR

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL ARroyo's chief of staff Michael Defensor is the first senatorial wannabe to get presidential endorsement.

President Arroyo announced Defensor's bid for a seat in the Senate in next year's mid-term elections during a dinner with Northern Luzon governors and mayors at the Mansion House in Baguio City Wednesday night.

"Mike is running for senator and please help him," Defensor quoted Ms Arroyo as telling the local officials led by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

The President and her family are in Baguio where they are spending New Year's Day.

Defensor said he was "surprised" by President Arroyo's endorsement, noting that the last time he was with the President was in the middle of the controversy regarding the convening of a constituent assembly to push Charter change. He said he opposed it.

Defensor said several weeks ago he had asked President Arroyo if he could "work a little" on his senatorial campaign and slow down on his work in Malacanang.

Ms Arroyo, he said, told him to "go ahead."

He said he would submit his resignation to the President and make a formal announcement of his candidacy on the first week of January, probably by Jan.4.

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio, the possible campaign manager for the administration coalition, has yet to announce the 12 senatorial candidates that would make up the administration's slate for the Senate.

Defensor also said it was likely that the administration would again establish a coalition for the May 2007 polls to be made up of Lakas, Liberal Party, NPC, Kampi and PDSP.

The Commission on Elections forbids electioneering before the official start of the campaign period in February.

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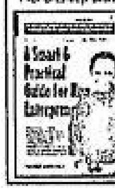

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SWS: 9 out of 10 Pino

From page A1

The level of hopefulness drops among those who suffered "severe hunger" (experiencing hunger often or always). Seventy-eight percent say they are entering 2007 with hope.

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Ninety-one percent of adult Filipinos say they will enter the New Year with hope rather than fear, up six percentage points from the last quarter of 2005.

High hopes for 2007 are shared across all areas and socioeconomic classes, according to SWS.

From 73% to 92%

Hopefulness among members of the socioeconomic class ABC rose to 92 percent this year from from 73 percent in 2005.

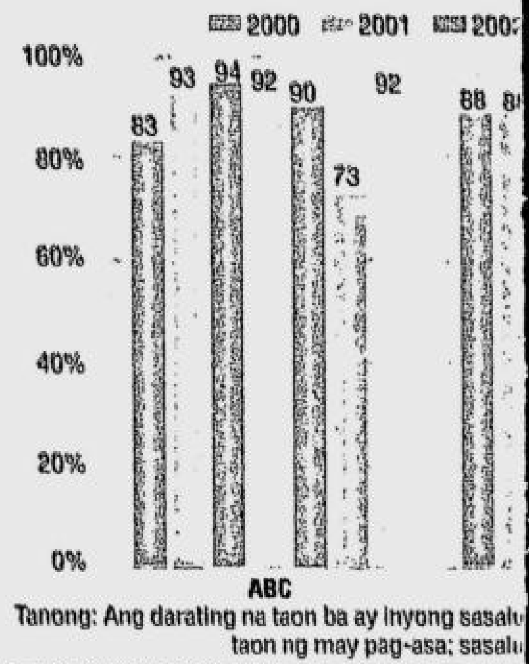
Among class D, hopefulness was also up from 87 percent to 91 percent, and among class E it went up from 83 percent to 91 percent.

Hope for the New Year also increased in all areas compared with the previous year, except in Metro Manila, where it stayed at 87 percent, SWS said.

Elsewhere, it increased from 83 percent to

PERCENT ENTERING TH

BY CLAS



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SOURCE: SWS RELEASE

NEVER SO MANY: The widows and orphans of slain politicians assemble to plot their next moves.
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of slain Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr., and Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna, subject of a murder attempt

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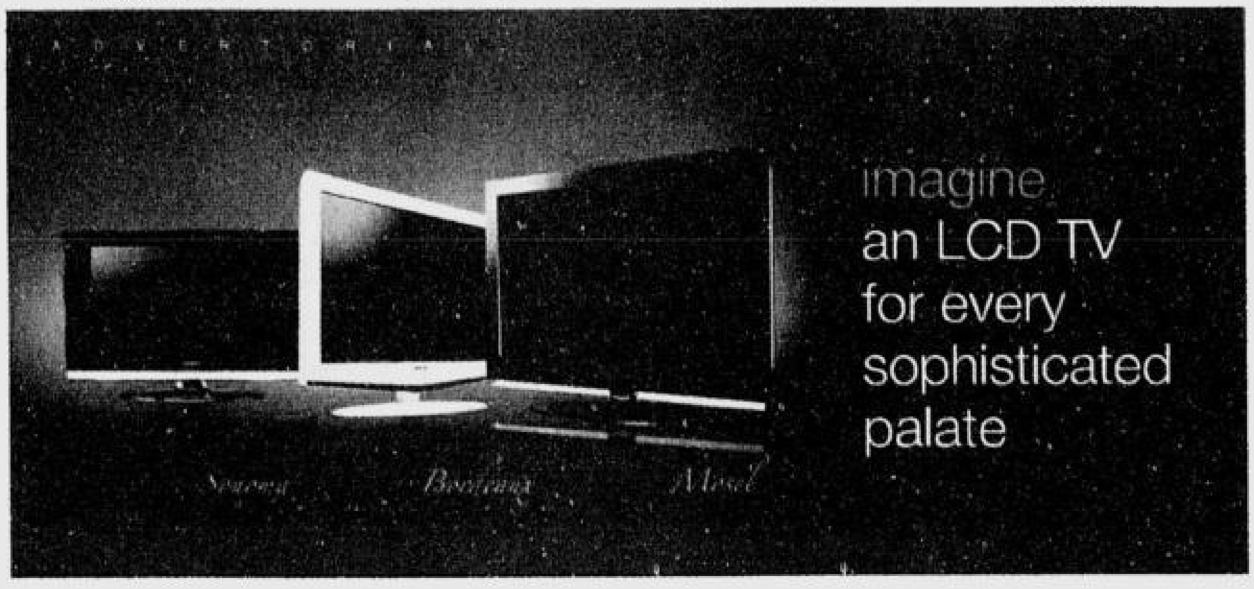

"A person's choice of wine reflects
his lifestyle, his personality.
There are so many cues for us to
draw inspiration from."

Mr SJ Park
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IMAGINE THIS. You've had a full day, you're ready to indulge in a moment to yourself. You take your favourite wine glass, fill it with wine. Pour, swirl, contemplate. You examine the colour, take in the heavenly bouquet and finally, take a sip. Perfection.

Now, would it have been an easy to-like Californian wine from Sonoma, an elegant Bordeaux wine from France, or a German high-quality Mosel wine in that glass? Your choice reflects your character, your personality. Just as how wine is paired with food to bring out its best qualities, you can meet your ideal match in a Samsung LCD TV. When paired off, it is the perfect component to your lifestyle. Which wine personality are you?

The fun and free-spirited

You like to bring your friends together. You like to be the life of the party. You are a conversation starter, the one with ideas on what to do, where to go. You glide easily between your social circles, with a glass of Californian wine in your hands. You think of clean lines as an expression of refinement and classiness. You think that technology should be fun and entertaining.

Just as how you enjoy the fun and free-spirited Sonoma wine, you'll find the Sonoma LCD TV to your taste. Simplicity at its most sophisticated, the Sonoma is perfect for house parties. Beneath the seamlessly glossy exterior, it's power-packed with excellent Dynamic Contrast and amazing surround sound, and is optimised for gaming at the touch of a button. And with connectivity outlets to camera, camcorder, game player and headphones neatly tucked in at the back, the full digital lifestyle is yours.

The elegant and chic

You carry yourself confidently, having made your mark in the world and proven yourself. Your equivalent of a coffee break is relaxing with a fine glass of French wine at the country club. You shun the noisy pubs for the quiet respite of the wine bar. You are put together impeccably and you believe half of making it to the top is looking good while staying there.

A Samsung Bordeaux LCD TV will fit perfectly in your swanky home interior. Whilst at a wine bar, the Samsung design team was looking at an empty Bordeaux wine glass. The crimson in the glass caught the light at an angle and caught the imagination of the designers. From every angle, they studied, scrutinised, examined and was inspired. And the result? The beautifully-crafted Samsung Bordeaux LCD TV. It makes a powerful

Some appreciate the free-spirited Californian Sonoma, while some pledge affinity to the elegant French Bordeaux. Perfectionists would not miss the German Mosel. It's a lifestyle statement; these showpieces clearly reflect that.

Yoon Jae Kang
Chief Designer

statement with an elegance that is truly pleasing to the eye. The Bordeaux red at the V-curve hints at the elegance inspired by a wine glass. With a novel swivel stand, it claims its queenly position as the centrepiece of every living room where it stands. Like a connoisseur appreciative of a Bordeaux wine glass, you'll be mesmerised by the revolutionary design of the Bordeaux. Welcome to your viewing shangri-la.

The discerning and polished

You have tasted success and the best, and you demand nothing less from your everyday living. You would probably have a subscription to Harvard Business Review and Luxury Travel. You are picky only because you really do know what's the best. You appreciate having it 'just right'. And just right means perfection to the T, and more. You would want to know how, when and where the fine wine, the luxury car, and the black caviar came about. You'll only accept the perfection built into the Samsung Mosel LCD TV, no less. Fusing the high luxury design with the pinnacle of display technology, the Mosel is sculpted for the uncompromising you. Imagine the moon casting a shadow on the beautiful sea horizon, giving it a blue hue, that spreads as far as the eye can see. Now imagine a unique and blue LED light illuminating the bottom plate of the Mosel, emitting a special aura. The sparkling clarity of Mosel riesling wine has inspired the design of the crystal-clear bottom plate. A precision engineered beauty, you may just forget that you are watching TV. It is a cultured perfection, like a glass of fine Mosel wine.

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From 73% to 92%

Hopefulness among members of the socioeconomic class ABC rose to 92 percent this year from from 73 percent in 2005.

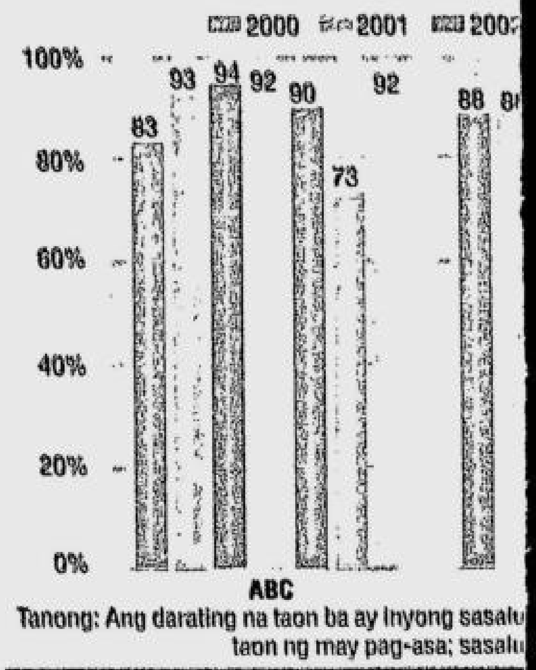
Among class D, hopefulness was also up from 87 percent to 91 percent, and among class E it went up from 83 percent to 91 percent.

Hope for the New Year also increased in all areas compared with the previous year, except in Metro Manila, where it stayed at 87 percent, SWS said.

Elsewhere, it increased from 83 percent to

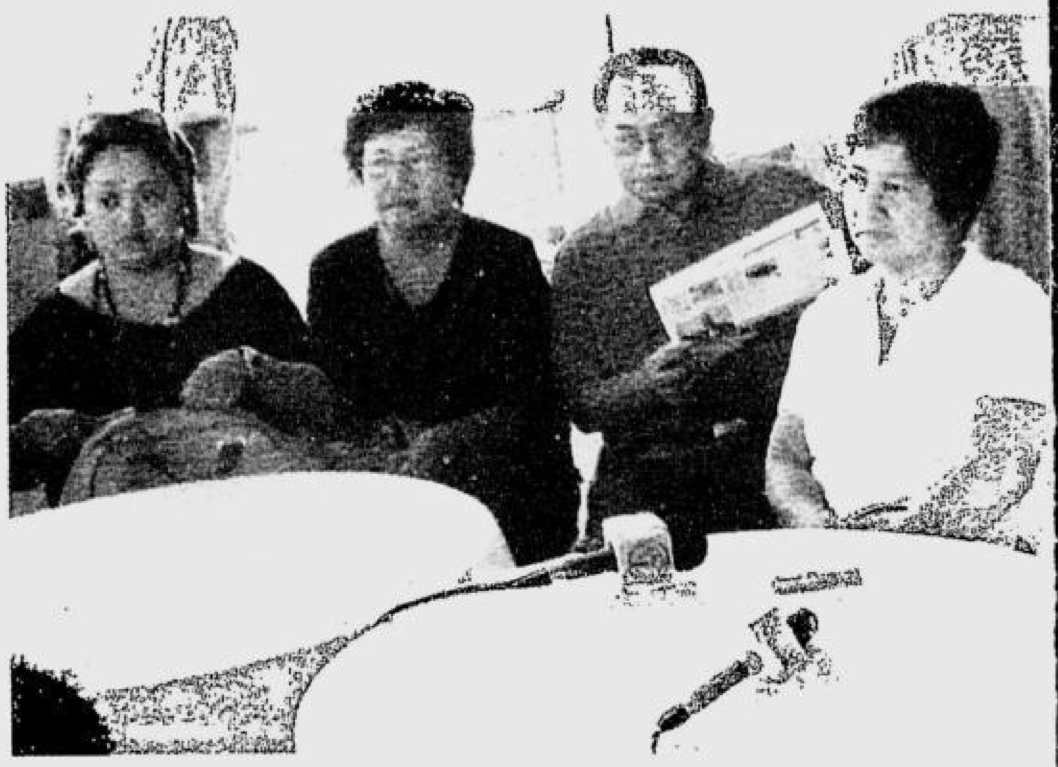
PERCENT ENTERING TH

BY CLAS

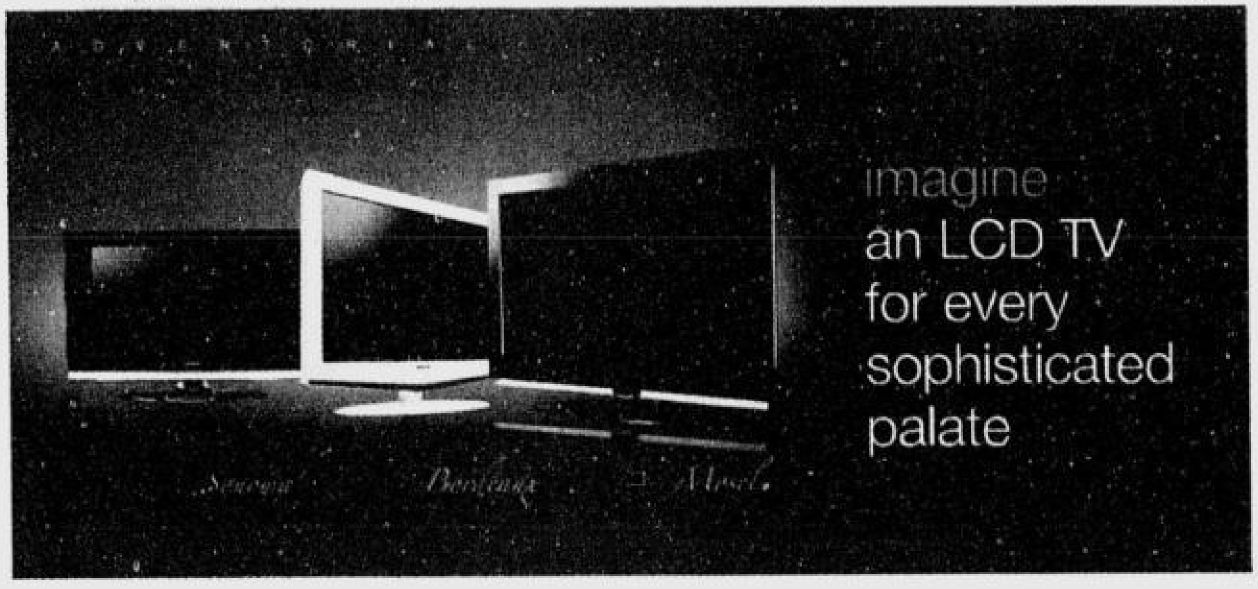


Tanong: Ang darating na taon ba ay inyong sasalu
taon ng may pag-asa; sasalu

SOURCE: SWS RELEASE



NEVER SO MANY: The widows and orphans of slain politicians assemble to plot their next moves.
and former Abra Gov. Andres Bernos (parents of El Bernos); Josefina Bersamin, wife of slain Boar
of slain Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr., and Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna, subject of a murder attempt



"A person's choice of wine reflects his lifestyle, his personality. There are so many cues for us to draw inspiration from."

Mr SJ Park
President & CEO
Samsung South-East Asia & Oceania

IMAGINE THIS. You've had a full day; you're ready to indulge in a moment to yourself. You take your favourite wine glass, fill it with wine. Pour, swirl, contemplate. You examine the colour, take in the heavenly bouquet and finally, take a sip. Perfection.

Now, would it have been an easy-to-like Californian wine from Sonoma, an elegant Bordeaux wine from France, or a German high-quality Mosel wine in that glass? Your choice reflects your character, your personality. Just as how wine is paired with food to bring out its best qualities, you can meet your ideal match in a Samsung LCD TV. When paired off, it is the perfect component to your lifestyle. Which wine personality are you?

The fun and free-spirited

You like to bring your friends together. You like to be the life of the party. You are a conversation starter, the one with ideas on what to do, where to go. You glide easily between your social circles, with a glass of Californian wine in your hands. You think of clean lines as an expression of refinement and classiness. You think that technology should be fun and entertaining.

Just as how you enjoy the fun and free-spirited Sonoma wine, you'll find the Sonoma LCD TV to your taste. Simplicity at its most sophisticated, the Sonoma is perfect for house parties. Beneath the seamlessly glossy exterior, it's power-packed with excellent Dynamic Contrast and amazing surround sound, and is optimised for gaming at the touch of a button. And with connectivity outlets to camera, camcorder, game player and headphones neatly tucked in at the back, the full digital lifestyle is yours.

The elegant and chic

You carry yourself confidently, having made your mark in the world and proven yourself. Your equivalent of a coffee break is relaxing with a fine glass of French wine at the country club. You shun the noisy pubs for the quiet respite of the wine bar. You are put together impeccably and you believe half of making it to the top is looking good while staying there.

A Samsung Bordeaux LCD TV will fit perfectly in your swanky home interior. Whilst at a wine bar, the Samsung design team was looking at an empty Bordeaux wine glass. The crimson in the glass caught the light at an angle and caught the imagination of the designers. From every angle, they studied, scrutinised, examined and was inspired. And the result? The beautifully-crafted Samsung Bordeaux LCD TV. It makes a powerful

"Some appreciate the free-spirited Californian Sonoma, while some pledge affinity to the elegant French Bordeaux. Perfectionists would not miss the German Mosel. It's a lifestyle statement; these showpieces clearly reflect that."

Yoon Jae Kang
Chief Designer

statement with an elegance that is truly pleasing to the eye. The Bordeaux red at the V-curve hints at the elegance inspired by a wine glass. With a novel swivel stand, it claims its queenly position as the centrepiece of every living room where it stands. Like a connoisseur appreciative of a Bordeaux wine glass, you'll be mesmerised by the revolutionary design of the Bordeaux. Welcome to your viewing shangri-la.

The discerning and polished

You have tasted success and the best, and you demand nothing less from your everyday living. You would probably have a subscription to Harvard Business Review and Luxury Travel. You are picky only because you really do know what's the best. You appreciate having it 'just right'. And just right means perfection to the T, and more. You would want to know how, when and where the fine wine, the luxury car, and the black caviar came about. You'll only accept the perfection built into the Samsung Mosel LCD TV, no less. Fusing the high luxury design with the pinnacle of display technology, the Mosel is sculpted for the uncompromising you. Imagine the moon casting a shadow on the beautiful sea horizon, giving it a blue hue, that spreads as far as the eye can see. Now imagine a unique and blue LED light illuminating the bottom plate of the Mosel, emitting a special aura. The sparkling clarity of Mosel riesling wine has inspired the design of the crystal-clear bottom plate. A precision engineered beauty, you may just forget that you are watching TV.

It is a cultured perfection, like a glass of fine Mosel wine.

As a global leader in LCD TVs, Samsung sees beyond technological breakthroughs and moving boxes. Every product is designed around your lifestyle, your needs and desires – that's what inspires us to continuously create products with a soul. And this is only the beginning. With Samsung LCD TVs, it's not that hard to imagine.

Examine, touch, smell, feel, contemplate on the after-taste. You'll soon find yourself indulging in either a Sonoma, Bordeaux or Mosel.

President & CEO, Samsung
South-East Asia & Oceania

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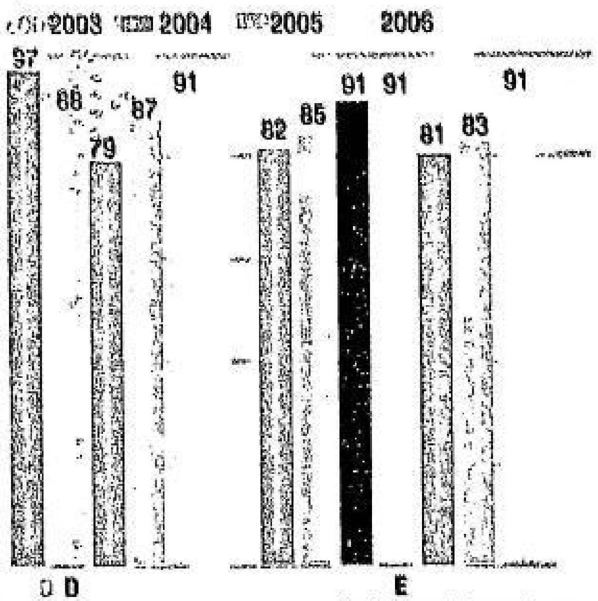
ys enter New Year with high hopes

E COMING YEAR WITH HOPE

S, 2000-2006



bungin na may pag-asa o pangamba? (Sasalubungin ang
bungin ang taon ng may pangamba)

92 percent in the rest of Luzon, from 88 percent to 93 percent in the Visayas and from 84 percent to 90 percent in Mindanao.

SWS has been conducting the survey about hope for the New Year since 2000.

In the seven annual surveys, hope has ranged between 81 percent (2004) and 95 percent (2002).

This year's survey was conducted from Nov. 24 to Nov. 29 using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults nationwide.

It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. *Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research*

Is it with hope or with fear that you enter the coming year? (By area and class, November 2006)

	RP	NCR	Bal Luzon	Vis	Min	ABC	D	E
With hope	91%	87	92	93	90	92	91	91
With fear	8	12	7	6	9	6	8	9

Source: SWS release

From left: Joy Bernos, wife of La Paz Mayor El Bernos; Ester
Member James Bersamin; Charrie Bersamin (eldest daughter

LEONCIO BALBIN JR/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Widows, orphans of slain Abra politicos unite to fight Valeras

From page A1

lawlessness in the province.

"I'm in retirement but I would volunteer to be even the messenger for the group as long as we stop the killings," said former Gov. Andres Bernos, father of the slain Bernos.

The elder Bernos said he believed the murder of his son and Bersamin was the handiwork of the same group.

"The artist's sketch of the killer (of Bersamin) is very similar to the gunman who shot my son," Bernos said.

"Also, the operations that were done were so planned and only a moneyed man could finance them. They spent lots of money to shoulder such precise operations," he said.

The former governor said he wanted Eustaquio "Kit" Bersamin, younger brother of the slain congressman, to run for governor.

"If the authorities catch Bersamin's killers, they will already solve my husband's murder," said Joy Bernos.

"Who is the one interested in getting these people eliminated? Who would benefit the most?" asked Charrie Bersamin.

Lenin Benwaren said the trigger man in Bersamin's murder also looked similar to the killer of his brother.

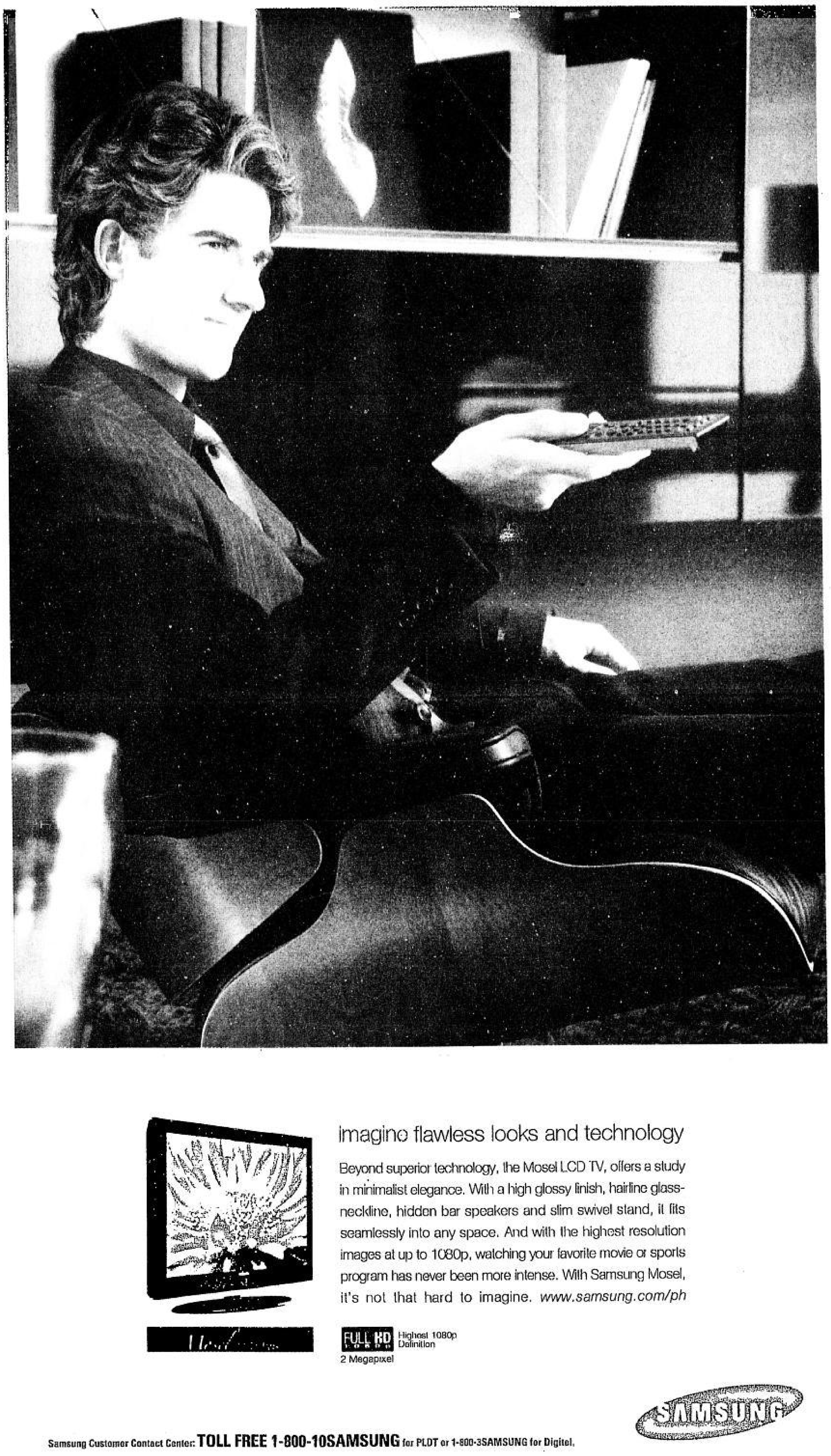
Top councilor

Only Josefina Bersamin, widow of James Bersamin, decided not to enter politics.

"I would stick to business," she said. Her husband, the top board member of Abra, was gunned down in November while jogging near the Bangued town plaza.

Lagayan Mayor Luna, who escaped an assassination attempt in 2005, said Valera immediately blamed her for the killing of Luis Bersamin.

"How could that be when it was he (Bersamin) who was my hope and savior of my family and was the one who warned us of the killing attempt," she said.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OPINION

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Growth for whom?

EDITORIAL

THE FINANCIAL MARKETS HAVE GIVEN THE Arroyo administration some good reasons to cheer as the nation prepares to welcome the new year. Yesterday, the stock market composite index closed at 2943.38 points, its best finish in close to 10 years. The peso was also at its strongest level in almost six years, closing at 49.157 to the dollar.

The local stock market has been tracing an Asia-wide trend that has seen indexes registering multi-year highs. But analysts say there is more to the surge in stock prices than that. "Everyone is looking at a better year," they say.

It is an optimism shared by the administration, of course. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said: "Our people have every reason to remain upbeat not just this Christmas but for the year to come as we are on full swing to economic takeoff. All indications point to a bullish 2007." President Macapagal-Arroyo is looking farther than next year and seeing the country becoming an "Enchanted Kingdom." She has challenged employers to "stay together" and "dream together" and help the country attain First World status in 20 years.

Is that all a dream? Key indicators show the economy making good progress on a broad front. Despite the series of typhoons, the National Economic and Development Authority is sticking to its forecast of a 5.5 to 6.2 percent growth in Gross Domestic Product for the whole of 2006, and a faster growth rate of between 5.8 and 6.6 percent in 2007. To put Filipinos in the mood to celebrate Christmas, the government took out full-page newspaper ads highlighting the country's economic performance this year. The ad pointed out that the 5.8 percent growth in the Gross National Product during the third quarter of the year represented a 21.34 percent increase over 21 months. Inflation has slowed considerably, with the inflation rate going to 4.7 percent in November compared to 8.4 percent in January 2005. Interest rates have also gone down, with the 91-day Treasury Bills earning just 5.44 percent in September, compared to 7.66 percent in January 2005.

Apparently foreign investors like what they see: they sank a total of P106.2 billion in new investments during the first half of the year. So do the international credit rating institutions, which all upgraded the country's rating, even if the more prestigious ones still balked at giving the green light to investors.

The key to lifting the economy out of the doldrums was the tax reform program that the administration pushed through Congress two years ago. Imposing the sin taxes, raising the valued-added tax rate to 12 percent and expanding its coverage allowed the government to increase its revenues. This, coupled with a tighter spending program resulting from the failure of Congress to pass the national budget, allowed the government not only to stop the widening of the deficit but to shrink it to less than what it had planned in each of the last two years. It also helped that the remittances of overseas Filipino workers were hitting record amounts as they helped raise the value of the peso and thus reduce the allocations for the servicing of foreign debts.

To be sure, it took political will to push for the new tax laws in the face of rising commodity prices, fueled largely by constantly increasing oil prices. But with bankruptcy facing the government and political chaos threatening to follow, the options before the administration then was to tax or to perish. To its credit, the administration made the right choice.

Now it will need more political will to sustain those gains. With the elections coming in May, the temptation is strong to engage in reckless spending not only to ensure an administration victory but to garner a clear majority that will quash any fresh attempt to impeach the President.

It will require an even greater political will—and vision—to address the biggest and the most intractable problem facing the nation: poverty. While official figures show that the number of jobless persons has gone down, the record is anything but impressive. In fact, government officials admit that the rate of job creation is falling far short of the target of 1.5 million a year.

This largely explains why 3.3 million Filipino families continue to report having experienced hunger at least once in the last three months. This also explains why there are more people who are dissatisfied with the President than those who are satisfied. Until the poor get to partake of the fruits of growth, those rosy statistics will be next to meaningless.

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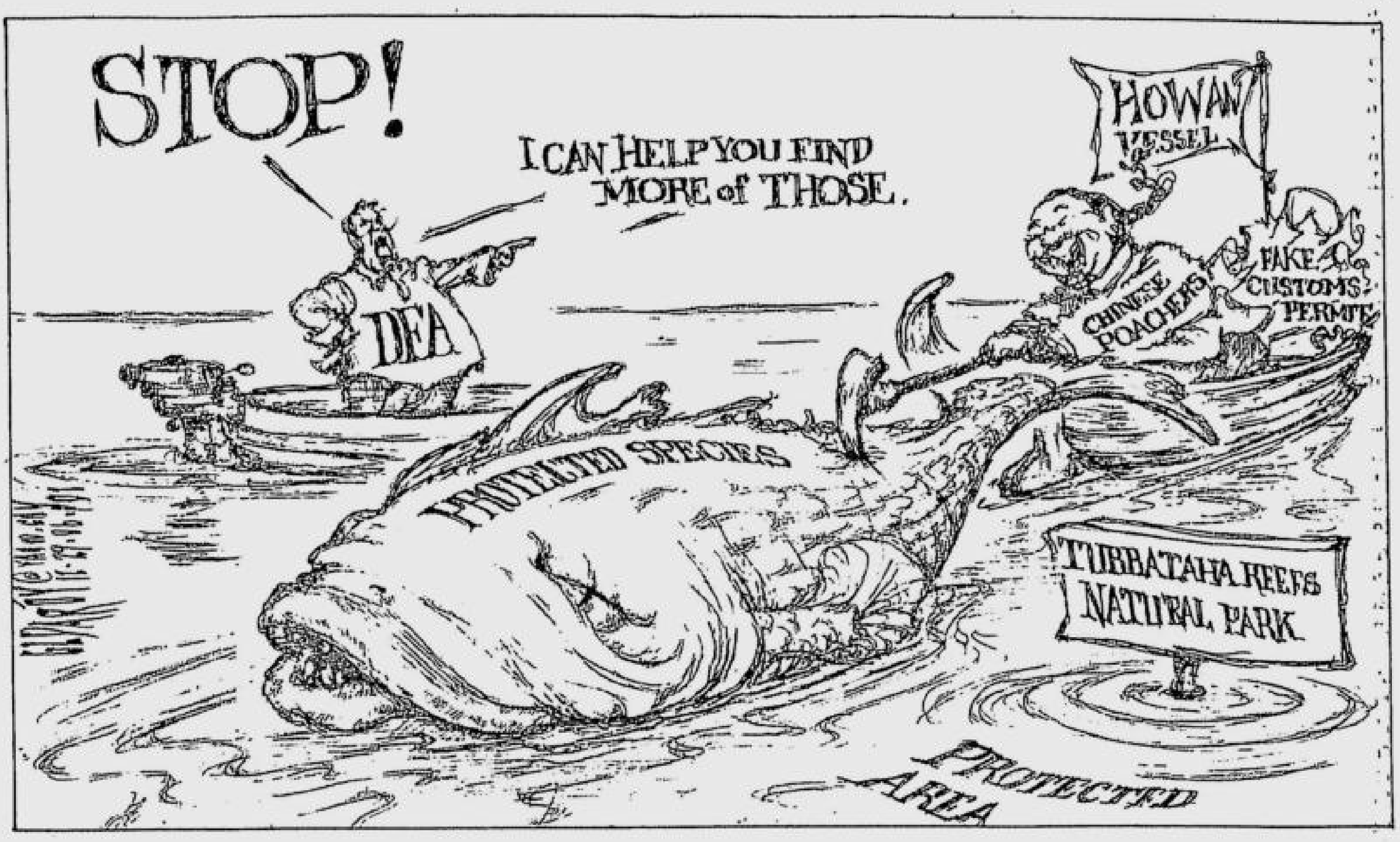

Telling the future

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THIS IS AGAIN THE TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN fortune-tellers come out of the woodwork and pretend they're able to foretell the future. They call themselves various names—psychic, astrologer, clairvoyant, seer, seeress, soothsayer, crystal gazer, etc.—all sorts of names except the right one: charlatan.

The rise of these charlat… er, psychics is mainly the fault of the media. Desperate for news materials in the usually "slow" pre-New Year season, they print or broadcast the prognostications of fortune-tellers, thinking they make for good human interest stories.

Madame Auring has become a celebrity of sorts due to her publicized love affairs with younger men. And a whole *manghuhula* industry has blossomed, ironically, around the Quiapo Church where distressed wives and lovers find "crutches" to tide them over during the day. Family members desperately looking for lost relatives or lost property also turn to the *maghuhula* for help. The *manghuhula* obliges them and, for a certain fee, gives them hope.

There is a certain art to being a *manghuhula*. Being one—at least, of the Quiapo variety—is like being Princess Scheherazade, the storyteller in Arabian Nights. The *manghuhula* tells a story that is never finished, that has suspense toward the end, so that, like in Scheherazade's Sultan, the victim, er, customer, keeps coming back for a continuation of the suspense-filled story.

For example, a love-struck man (or woman) is told that somebody is secretly in love with him/her. Naturally, he/she would like to know who it is. And cleverly the *manghuhula* would answer that the image is still hazy. "We will probably see who it is the next time. Come back (and don't forget my fee)," the *manghuhula* would say. And like a sap, the victim would keep coming back.

Or the *manghuhula* would tell customers with a pecuniary bent that they are about to come upon a vast fortune—but what fortune and where it will come from or how they can get it, he can't tell yet. "Come back (with my fee) and we will see," the *manghuhula* would say. Only in next meeting, the *manghuhula* can't see it yet. Maybe next time. So the victim keeps coming back and the *manghuhula* is assured of a steady income.

Once, as a teenager, when I took a vacation in the province, I took to telling fortunes to the yokels, purely out of entertainment, for free. I told fortunes not with a crystal ball or by the lines of the palms of the hand, but with playing cards. It was taught to me by a cousin, and it was quite easy, it being based purely on psychology.

The principle is to create curiosity and greed. Everybody wants to be loved and to get rich. The *manghuhula* capitalizes on that.

My method was to shuffle the playing cards and lay them on the table one by one, face up so the person could see it.

The fortune-telling went this way: When a Jack appears, a young man is secretly in love with the "customer"; if it is a King, he is a married man; if it is a Queen then it is a woman; if the "customer" is a woman, the woman secretly in love with her is probably a lesbian. If a diamond appears, a fortune will come to the person; if it is a ten of diamonds, it would be a vast fortune; if it is only a two of diamonds, not much. If it is a King of diamonds, the secret lover is a rich man.

See, all of this plays on the natural desire of every individual to be loved and to get rich. All the other stuffs of the *manghuhulas* are variations of the same principle.

It is probably because of the superstitious nature of the Filipinos, as well as the tradition of fortune-telling in the midst of uncertainty, that they are especially susceptible to self-proclaimed psychics and clairvoyants. It is due, no doubt, to this gullibility and naiveté of Filipinos that a clutch of psychics are now in the Philippines, foretelling the future of the world.

Among their prognostications: there will be a vast flood somewhere; violence elsewhere; an important official will die, a plane crash, etc., etc. Where and who, they can't say yet.

But you see, the predictions are all hazy, ambiguous and iffy. But those things are sure to happen somewhere, sometime. And when they do, the psychics will boast: "I foretold that!"

But floods do happen all the time in one place or the other. They happen several times a year in the Philippines. Planes crash and presidents and prime ministers die all the time; there is violence everywhere. In fact, there are several wars going on right now, not to mention inner violence.

But ask a psychic or *manghuhula*: Will GMA be able to finish her term? Who will be our next president? Who will win the next basketball game or the next horserace? What numbers will win the next lotto or sweepstakes draw? They can't tell. If they can, they will be filthy rich and will not have to depend on fortune-telling for a living.

Come to think of it, if the *manghuhulas* can tell the future, why are most of them poor? Why do they have to ply their trade on the sidewalks of Manila or in carnivals during town fiestas? Why do they have ramshackle fortune-telling parlors in decaying apartment houses in the seedy parts of cities? Why don't they have mansions? Why don't they win the lotto and the sweepstakes? Or why can't they go to a casino and put it out of business, that is, if they really can tell the future?

But I can foretell the future, not in the coming year but in the next few days: There will be several fires; a number of people will die, some in the fires, others in stabbing incidents, and still others from gunshot wounds. Many hands and limbs will be blown off by firecrackers; a few people will be poisoned. And our public officials will begin finger-pointing soon after.

Ang Kapatiran: New Hopes for the New Year

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

THE FULL-PAGE AD TAKEN BY THE GROUP Ang Kapatiran ng Pangkalahatang Kabutihan (or Alliance for the Common Good) offers hope for the year just a-borning.

It teaches us a lesson about the place for incremental reforms and focused causes—they give sanctuary to grander dreams before their time has come. I do not know any of the personalities involved in Kapatiran, except its secretary-general, Nandy Pacheco, and its president, Mario Ongkiko, my fellow professor at the UP College of Law. I am aware of Nandy's pioneering work in the Gunless Society, and of Mario's work as a lawyer for public causes, chief among them, as deputy general counsel of the Agrava Commission that investigated the assassination of Ninoy Aquino.

Nandy's campaign against guns has become the vehicle for a larger advocacy for peace, and is now expressed more fully in Kapatiran's program. It should teach a lesson or two to young activists, the grim and determined type, who eschew concrete reforms in exchange for millenarian visions and universal theories, and show them that, as Kapatiran says, "small sacrifices by individuals can create benefits for all."

It also teaches us the place of principled and program-based politics; Kapatiran has been widely praised for reversing the process of choosing leaders; they have declared their foundational principles, and they now dare those who share these principles to join them and put their necks on the line. "In Kapatiran, principles and platform come first before personalities," Nandy states. "This is not so with traditional political parties, which promote personalities, patronage, and pay-off. The people have grown accustomed to focusing on celebrity politics or the politics of personality resulting in the wholesale failure of the people to express their collective aspirations, what they want to become, the kind of society they want to have, and how to move from the present condition to the condition they want to reach."

Kapatiran speaks of a "politics of virtue," and aims to attract into its fold "servant leaders" in the manner of the biblical teaching that "he who is first must be last." They seek candidates who possess a "consistent ethic of life, who will work to dismantle structures that glorify vice and violence and who will push for progressive disarmament."

Beyond that, Kapatiran also teaches us the need to bridge the gap "between facts and norms." Sure it speaks grandly of a "culture of life, peace and active nonviolence … as a precondition to a consistent ethic of life." But it also proposes detailed reforms, like the ban on the sale of firearms and bullets in malls, the export of guns, the importation of toy guns, and the prohibition on window tints on vehicles.

I just have two suggestions for Kapatiran. While I wholly agree with them that all reforms entail a spiritual dimension, I am much too secular to have that explicitly included in a political program. I do not object to ideas rooted in religious teachings; Kapatiran has embraced the compelling papal admonition for us to exercise a "preferential option for the poor," an idea that, I believe, has now been embraced by the world outside the Vatican. It has even been codified into the Constitution through the social justice clause. Certainly we need to complete the change of ourselves in dialogue with our faith, but why formalize it as part of a party platform? There are pragmatic reasons to avoid this—it will turn off kindred souls among Muslim and other churches—but I will go for the principled reason based on the doctrine of Church-State separation.

Moreover, the group's collective vision needs to be fleshed out, not so much in implementing details, but more in its conceptual framework. Kapatiran's position of foreign relations simply quotes Isaiah's prophecy: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not raise sword against another nation, neither shall they train for war again." That has long been codified into the Philippine Constitution (we "renounce war as an instrument of national policy"), yet we have found nice legal ways to distinguish "wars of aggression" from self-defense and, on the other side of the battlefield, "wars of national liberation."

Other commentators have praised Kapatiran as wonderfully quixotic, but beating swords into plowshares will require a lot more input from Sancho Panza. In other words, if Kapatiran aims to "let the dreamers wake the nation," as the song goes, it will at some point have to reckon with the world as we find it, warts and all, a task for which the dreamers will need the help of the realists. I mentioned this to an expatriate who has lived for almost 20 years in Manila, and this was his chief concern: Won't the politicians eat them alive? Well, Kapatiran registered as a political party only for the May 2004 elections, and should give us the answer to that question in May 2007.

Finally, seeing Pacheco's verve and energy, I think Kapatiran has stumbled upon one real, untapped resource in our campaign for national regeneration: our senior and retired citizens. This I personally discovered when I was law dean at UP. Who can match the wisdom and seasoned judgment of the elders? Even more difficult, who can match the selflessness of those who have already lived a full life? On top of that, they can help you tap amazing networks of like-minded reformists, easily accessible to them via cell phone. Ah, if only more of these guys will learn to use email!

* * *

Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com

How Christmas came to us

COMMENTARY

Nono Alfonso, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

MALACCA, MALAYSIA—IT LOOKED LIKE A scene from the Philippines after two supertyphoons hit the country, one after the other, and left a thousand people dead and a number of villages in utter ruin. But this is Malaysia, whose southern states, after four days of continuous rain, experienced floods unprecedented in the last 30 or 40 years. On Christmas day, the rain stopped, but by this time, eight people had been confirmed dead, while 80,000 others were evacuated and forced to live in relief centers. Figures about the extent of the damage on property are yet to come.

A few of us Jesuits are in Malacca. We have been here for the past few days and have been following the news about the floods. The first thing that struck us was disbelief. One would not expect this catastrophe befalling on a fast-developing country like Malaysia. This year alone, the country's economic growth is estimated at 5.8 percent, and the backbone of that growth is the infrastructure sector. In recent months, the Malaysian ringgit went 3.5 against the dollar. The problem of poverty seems to have been dealt with significantly. One government estimate, for example, places the "hardcore poor"—the equivalent of the so-called E class, which is estimated from 10 to 20 percent of the Philippine population—in urban and rural areas at 0.4 percent in 2004. Still, its economic managers are determined to push the country further up.

The economic performance of Malaysia notwithstanding, the country did not seem prepared for the floods. Already, its counterpart of the Philippines' National Disaster Coordinating Council is being criticized for its slow rescue operations. Several families had to wait for days on their rooftops before they could be brought to safety. In the evacuation or relief "stations," as they are called here, food, water and clothing are becoming scarce. Fortunately, the private sector has come into the picture with donations for the flood victims. Compounding the situation are accounts of people who took (or are taking) advantage of the situation—for example, "rescue service" for exorbitant fees, or overpriced basic commodities. There were reports of looters as well, which prompted Malaysia's prime minister to suggest citizens' arrest and urge the police to plead with people not to beat the looters. And the electric company here has announced that in some areas, the resumption of power service would take some time as a large number of power cables and facilities have been damaged in the floods. But the real bad news may be this, the rainy season is just beginning.

All this would appear to be a consolation to disaster-prone countries (like the Philippines) that like to play the blame-game when calamities strike, and when rescue operations and rehabilitation move at a snail's pace. As the Malaysian experience now shows—and, of course the US experience with Katrina—even the more capable countries are not immune to panic in the face of natural disasters. The moral of the story is one can never be really prepared against the unpredictable force of Mother Nature.

But as columnists now in Malaysia point out, we are only reaping what we have sown; our nonchalant attitude toward the environment, which we have often sacrificed for the cause of "progress," is largely to blame for the slew of natural calamities that has struck us in recent years.

But there is a silver lining behind all these clouds. On Christmas day, when the rain stopped, Fr. Jojo Fung, S.J., a Malaysian Jesuit priest based in the worst-hit state of Johor, brought a handful of us to the outskirts of Malacca where the residents of a low-cost village had gone back to their houses and started cleaning up the place. The stench of dried mud that swept through the village at the height of the floods was still in the air. Furniture, appliances, boxes of clothes, kitchenware, stacks of papers and whatever was left from the floods lined the streets. While the residents worked hard to clean their houses—flushing out mud and drying their things—government trucks were rationing water, even as unscrupulous traders offered dry mattresses triple their regular price.

We immediately got ourselves dirty, literally, inside two houses, bringing the furniture out of the houses so we could wash out the mud inside.

We were total strangers; we couldn't speak any of the languages spoken here. But the help we offered was accepted graciously. Other volunteer groups were in fact coming in and out of the place offering any kind of help, including food. It was volunteerism in action. We saw it there in Malaysia, we see it in every place visited by disasters. Calamities bring out the best in us.

Incidentally, the families we helped were Muslims. They were the ones who pointed out the silver lining behind the calamity that hit them. "If not for the floods," said one, "we would never have gotten to know the neighbors in our village. We had little to do with them, especially the Christians. Since the floods however, we have been lending each other a hand, in whatever way possible. If not for the floods we wouldn't have known you at all, you, Christians."

When we started our meeting in Malacca, we were wondering how we could celebrate Christmas here in Malaysia where there are only 80,000 Catholics. But that Christmas day, Christmas itself came to us. In the wake of a disaster, the good news that Christ the Savior told all humanity once again came to life; we saw people bound by the spirit of brotherhood, unmindful of race, gender and even religion.

Protecting our interests

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IN AN ARTICLE, ROLAND SIMBULAN, PROFESsor and faculty regent in the University of the Philippines, cites Charles Bohlen, who served as US ambassador to the Philippines in the 1950s (at the height of the Cold War), telling a Filipino audience: "We in the US Embassy are here to protect American interests. We expect your officials to protect your own interests."

And that, boys and girls, is what the entwined issues of sovereignty and diplomacy are all about: two countries looking out for their own interests while seeking to deal with each other as equal and independent states. But while the US government—in the case of the Subic rape case and the ongoing wrangling for the custody of convicted rapist Daniel Smith—has most assuredly and spiritedly fought for its interests and the interests of its citizen, Filipino officials have brazenly and abjectly surrendered our own interests. After all, is not serving the ends of justice for a woman and citizen—and upholding sovereignty and the rule of law—in the national interest?

For all their huffing and puffing—and the deployment of the "Balikatan card" as a bargaining chip—we cannot begrudge the Americans, especially Ambassador Kristie Kenney, for what they are doing. They are only looking out for themselves and for Smith. But we can and should condemn our own officials, from President Macapagal-Arroyo to (In)justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo and their minions for failing to live up to the basic responsibility of any government official and civil servant, which is to protect the national interest and maintain loyalty to the country and its people.

* * *

SIMBULAN, who is best known for his years of study of the issues involved in the US military presence here, calls the decision to convict Smith "perhaps the next most significant victory for Philippine sovereignty after the 1991 Philippine Senate decision to dismantle the US military bases." And it is significant that the conviction of Smith, who was in the Philippines taking part in military exercises when he committed the rape, is likewise linked to the lingering military presence of the US military on Philippine soil made possible by the Visiting Forces Agreement.

What is the United States asking when it demands custody of Smith, citing terms in the VFA? Simbulan says what it wants is "to expand special treatment for Smith who has been staying in a five-star hotel all throughout the trial, with bodyguards and the luxurious amenities of a foreign diplomat."

Now the Bush administration, using its best bullying tactics, threatens to suspend the year-round "Balikatan" military exercises and "the US military assistance that ostensibly goes with it." Says Simbulan: "Well and good. Let them eat their words."

"The best thing that could happen to the Philippines right now is for the "Balikatan" war exercises to be scrapped permanently, for the "Balikatan" has only been used as a smokescreen for US military intervention in the Philippines under the guise of 'anti-terrorism training.' They expect the Philippine judicial system and our laws to cave in to this threat. We cannot bargain (away) the wheels of Philippine justice for supposed 'goodwill in RP-US relations,' US military intervention and a few crumbs of assistance from the US global anti-terror campaign. This is a question of justice that cannot be compromised," declares the UP professor.

* * *

THIS is not the first time, either, that the United States has used its political and military leverage to pressure Philippine officials into doing what it wants. Recall that when the Philippine negotiators started playing hard ball with their American counterparts on the renegotiation of the bases agreement, the US government suddenly announced that it was pulling out the Peace Corps, citing "security concerns."

The move was clearly meant to bully the Philippine side, but it only resulted in the politicization of what had until then been a remarkable exercise in amity between the two countries, ruining whatever pretense the Peace Corps maintained about its "humanitarian" presence in the Philippines. "Let us also take a hard look at the Visiting Forces Agreement and work towards its immediate abrogation," urges Simbulan.

"The VFA has only been used to give special treatment and extra-territorial rights to US forces committing crimes on Philippine soil and (violating) our laws, while engaged in so-called military exercises. This country and most especially its top officials should learn to obey its own Constitution which guarantees 'equal protection before the law.' This is what Judge Pozon has taught all of us to assert in our own country."

* * *

WOMEN'S groups, in fact, welcome the suspension of "Balikatan," citing studies showing that military presence—foreign or local, but especially foreign since the troops seem to think it is a matter of "right" that they find sexual release—encourages the growth of the sex industry, including trafficking, in the vicinity.

And now it seems clear that, given their kid gloves treatment of Smith and his cohorts, American authorities don't think it's a crime for American soldiers to rape a Filipina then dump her in a public place half-dressed and incoherent. And by their acquiescence with American desires, neither do Filipino officials think it's an offense against Philippine honor and sovereignty.

I'll let Simbulan have the last word:

"This is why this country has difficulty in taking the road to progress, national self-determination and national development: its officials would rather protect the interests of powerful foreign interests, rather than the interests of their own people. Our own Filipino officials are often our own worst enemies."

Discovering the Filipino through the arts

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

LAST JUNE, DURING A PARANGAL AT THE Cultural Center of the Philippines, I addressed the newly minted national artists: Ben Cabrera, Bienvenido Lumbera, Ramon Obusan, Abdulmari Imao and I. P. Santos, as well as Fernando Poe Jr. and Ramon Valera (posthumous) at the close of a program filled with tribute and gratitude. I didn't want to douse cold water on the happy mood, but I felt it was time that the living artists were brought back to earth and reminded of our mortality.

I advised those who would ascend the stage with their glittering medals to enjoy the moment, to enjoy the Parangal, to savor the applause and adulation, as triumphant music blared and confetti rained on them like a benediction. After all, wasn't this a secular form of canonization that didn't require three miracles? I reminded the national artists that the next time they will be so honored on that very same CCP stage, they would not be standing up; they would be lying in a box—or, as in the case of the late creative Ramon Obusan yesterday, inside an urn, in the form of ashes.

When I received text messages last week that he had passed away in the Makati Medical Center, I did not realize he took my advice seriously and thus left all of us surprised and saddened. But then the Dalamhati yesterday at the CCP was probably the most stirring because they made welcome deviations from the "de kahon" program through an effective use of ethnic ritual, music and dance.

Here were the deeper layers of that onion we like to call national identity. An orchestra played as usual, but the gongs, the dances and the wailing, both ritual and real, added a new dimension to this Parangal that made it unlike any other. It was just as Ramon Obusan had wanted—lively, noisy, with lots of action onstage. Watching his dance scholars perform for him made everyone present feel the loss of a national artist who had much, much more to give to the nation. His enthusiasm and good cheer masked the truth that his health was deteriorating the last few years. He likened himself to a candle slowly wasting away, conscious of mortality and yet humble enough to restrain self-promotion by stating that while candles do waste away, they actually give out a lot of light in the process. His was a short life, but it was one that was well-lived.

Last June, Obusan was chosen to deliver a response on behalf of all the 2006 batch of national artists. Unlike the late painter Ang Kiukok who got tongue-tied and only managed to whisper thrice the word *Salamat* into a microphone in Malacañang, Obusan had not one, but two responses prepared. The one he read was short and delivered like a poem. He said: *"Ikinararangal kong maging kinatawan ng lahat ng hinirang na Pambansang Alagad ng Sining ngayong taon [2006]. Pagbigyan n'yo sana ako at patawarin sana ako ng Pambansang Alagad ng Sining sa Literatura, si Ka Bien kung ako'y magkukunwaring makata, sa aming pasasalamat.*

"Kinulayan ang ating lahi ng isang pintor [Bencab], Binigyang diwa't salita ng isang makata [Lumbera], Hampas sa bato, dinagdag ng eskultor [Imao], Wasiwas ng gunting, may gayak na masinsin [Valera]. Ang lahi'y nabuhay at sa tulong ng mananayaw [Obusan], Umindak sa pilapil, napangalay sa hangin. Syudad na masikip, pinahingo ng arkitekto [Santos], Sa dilim, namahinga, at natutong managinip, Sa paanan ng director [FPJ], na sa langit ay nakatingala. Pitong sining ang bumubuo, nagbibigay buhay. Ang kulay ng lahing Pilipino, kailanma'y di tatamlay. Maraming salamat po."

I know this is an English-language newspaper but the unread speech should really be published in the original Filipino. Here he speaks to us directly and tells us about his own life and work:

"Una akong nabighani ng mga tradisyunal na sayaw nung mapanood ko ang kasal sa Aklan nung decada singkwenta. Sa bawat indak at galaw ng mga bumabati sa bagong kasal at sa nakakatuwang pagsabit nila ng mga pera sa nakagayak ng mag-asawa, namulat ang aking mata at nabuhayan ng loob. Sa mga sandaling iyon, nakaharap ko ang diwa at henyo ng Pilipino. Magmula noon, di na ako mapakali at kinailangan kong hanapin ang diwang iyon. Isang diwang nabubuhay sa indak, sa ritwal, sa mga dasal at awit ng Katutubo.

"Sa aking patuloy na pagtuklas ng mga tradisyunal na sayaw, masasabi kong nakilala ko ang Pilipino. Ang kanyang simple at payak na pananalig, ang kanyang walang balakid na paglingap sa lupa at sa ekolohiya, ang kanyang patuloy na pagsisikap na mamuhay ng iisang diwa kay Bathala. At sa bawat pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga katutubo, ako'y humanga sa taimtim na damdamin na bumubuhay sa sining.

"Kung may isang buhay pa akong mabibigay sa bayan natin, susuyurin ko pa rin ang mga bundok at baybayin, ang mga ili at barrio, ang mga gubat at plaza upang patuloy na hanapin ang mga tradisyon ng katutubo natin. Ngunit iisa lang ang buhay ko—at sa ngayon ang masinsin at mapagmahal na pagbalot sa mga kaugaliang ito—at ang aking mapagkumbabang pag-abot sa mga susunod na henerasyon ng Filipino—ang tangi ko lang maiaalay.

"Maraming salamat sa mga nagtaguyod sa akin, ang aking mga kamag-anak, mga kaibigan, mga iba't-ibang dance groups at lalung-lalo na sa Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, ang tunay kong mga anak.

"Bayaan ninyong pasalamatan ko kayo sa pamamagitan ng isang magalang na pagyukod. Salamat po."

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Triple treat

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

FOR A YEAR-END TREAT, I'M DOING THREE TOPICS today, all revolving around the holiday season but with a bit of an anthropological reading of the signs of the times.

Breaking the stereotypes of "Filipino time," my friends were texting in Christmas greetings as early as the morning of Dec. 24. I guess people were trying to beat the Christmas midnight text crunch. The Indians used to have an "Hinglish" (Hindi-English) word for this: "prepone" as opposed to postpone.

A few observations about these preponed greetings—in case you're doing these again for the New Year:

The majority of the ones I got were unsigned. Make sure to identify yourself.

Something else that caught my attention was the language of greetings. Predictably, English dominated. I got only three messages in Tagalog, and one each in Cebuano and Ilonggo.

We really should send more local language greetings. Here's a simple Ilonggo New Year's greeting: *Mabungahong bag-ong tuig*! If you want a long Cebuano greeting from your family to your friends and their significant others, here's a kilometric one: *Ang akong banay nanghinaut nga ikaw ug ang imong mga pinalangga makatagamtam ug kalinaw, kalipay, kahimsug ug kalambuan karon ug sa umaabot nga mga katuigan.*

A poignant Filipino greeting would be these lines from the Christmas carol by Felipe de Leon, composed right after World War II: *Ang gabi ay payapa, lahat ay tahimik. Pati mga tala sa bughaw ng langit. Kay hinhin ng hangin, wari'y umiibig sa kapayapaan ng buong daigdig*. The lyrics make the carol appropriate for the New Year as well.

On the lighter side, one of the preponed greetings I got from a colleague in UP went this way: Gloria stops con-ass, delays con-con, reskeds ASEAN summit, so B4 she postpones Christmas 2, let me greet u & ur family a MERRY CHRISTMAS & a HAPPY NEW YEAR. Just modify message for the New Year and send out as early as you can.

And for next year's Christmas, save this favorite of mine, attributed to Prof. Bien Lumbera: *Parang lumang pabango/Ang Maligayang Pasko/Samyuin, angkinin mo/Pagbating laging bago*! (My loose translation: Like old perfume, savor, cherish Merry Christmas, a greeting that's always new.)

What's this

Need to pick up some last-minute gifts? I'd do it at the Sidcor market that's held every Sunday morning at the Lung Center.

It's been several years now since the energetic Susa Arcega first organized Sidcor, yet every Sunday is still an experience. Because of the variety of products, each time I go there, I'm bound to hear, several times, "What's this?" and "What's that?"

Involve the family in a discovery tour for everything—from homemade cakes to tutti-frutti children's sneakers from Chile. List local foods for the kids to track down in the market. They can even draw up their own lists using recipes and information from the Internet sites specializing in Filipino foods (try stefoodie.net and pinoyfoodtalk.net). I'm going to name some of the stuff they can look for but, unfortunately, I don't have too many vendors' names to give you, mainly because the stalls don't have signs.

Train your young gourmet cooks to go through the vegetable stalls and ask them to look for different kinds of onions. Get them to match the local names (e.g., *sibuyas* Tagalog) with the fancy English ones (shallots, scallions). Have them look up *luyang mura* (young ginger), *katuray* flowers, *kalabasa* flowers and various kinds of mushrooms. Have them concoct their own blend of tea with *tanglad* (lemongrass) and *kalamansi*.

Here's one to test their skills: ask them to look for *pako* (fern) that's edible. Hint: the stall that sells this also has great *pancit hab-hab*.

Here's another challenging one: Ask them to get different types of *camote*, and to differentiate these from *ube* and something called *yacon*, a tuber originally from the Andes region in Latin America. *Yacon* can be eaten as is, a snack food or mixed into a salad. Try it with the *pako* and lato (seaweeds) that you can find in the fish stalls.

Look for Aling Narsing, who sells the best *sinaing na tawilis* and *sinaing na tulingan* there. You'll have to explain to the kids what that kind of cooking involves (I just learned it involves pork, so do be careful) and what those fish are. (*Tawilis* is freshwater sardinella and *tulingan* is Pacific bluefin tuna.)

Bring them around the gardening section for another educational tour—from tiny potted herbs to the giant tree ferns.

Teach kids about fermentation by looking for native vinegars and wines. One man sells three varieties of *Ilokano basi*, as well as *sukang Iloko* or vinegar.

There's a lot of local produce around that would make for good last-minute gifts, with Batangas *barako* coffee and *kasoy* being among the best choices. For the finest *tikog* mats from Samar, there's one stall close to the entrance of the Lung Center. Last week that stall had something I haven't seen for years now: gauze cotton mosquito nets from Ilocos!.

Culture of pain

The BBC newscasts about the Christmas tragedy in Ormoc first described how the fireworks had set off the conflagration, and then commented on how, despite repeated tragedies, Filipinos continue to insist on using pyrotechnics.

It did occur to me that New Year's Eve seems to bring out our culture of pain, both the sadism (pleasure from inflicting pain) and masochism (pleasure derived from the pain itself). There's no lack of warnings in the mass media, including grisly TV footage of hands with missing fingers, blinded eyes, burn injuries. Maybe it's because we don't see enough of the less dramatic but even more tragic sequels, such as the slow and painful deaths from *watusi* poisoning and the tetanus that develop from the wounds.

But I also wonder if it's sadism that makes us insist on engaging in dangerous New Year's revelry. It's not so much courting danger for ourselves as putting others at risk—for example, in the way some of us throw lit firecrackers at each other.

I wonder about the advice to avoid firecrackers and "just" use noise-makers. I've seen adults deriving perverse pleasure from blowing trumpets into the ears of little children. This year, too, a new product that's become popular is a "bazooka" gadget made out of PVC pipes. The gadget ignites methyl alcohol to set off a deafening blast, so there are chemical hazards involved. And since it's mounted on the shoulder, you can imagine what it can do to one's hearing faculties.

And those who insist on firing guns, they're really pretending to be men—little boys who never grew up. You'll just have to remind them that even when they shoot into the air, the bullets need to come back down, sometimes with fatal results.

Take extra precautions with the vulnerable: the very young, the elderly; and don't forget your pets, keep them inside the house especially around midnight. It's one thing to live dangerously, and another to put people, children especially, in harm's way. Let's start the New Year right, and break free from our culture of pain.

Epira goals remain elusive

YEAR 2006 IS ABOUT TO END, BUT THE major goals of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) remain elusive. For example, after five years of the Epira, we see no significant progress being made toward the goals of retail competition and open access.

Obviously, these reforms cannot be implemented because before that can be done, the Epira requires the privatization of generation assets which produce at least 70 percent of the National Power Corp.'s total capacity, and the transfer of the management and control of at least 70 percent of the total energy output of power plants under contract with Napocor and IPP (independent power producers) administrators.

To be sure, several efforts are being made in that direction. For one, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has introduced an amendatory bill (Senate Bill No. 1929) seeking to hasten retail competition and open access in the power industry. But at the rate the bill is going, and considering the forthcoming 2007 elections, it seems bound for the archives. Last we heard, it is now for third reading at the Senate. Well and good, but its counterpart bill at the House of Representatives has undergone only one hearing. This means it may never reach the Bicameral Committee for approval.

We also acknowledge Sen. Sergio Osmeña III's active and intelligent involvement at Senate hearings on power issues. But we can't as yet see clearly his real stand on many of these issues.

The industry needs openness and sincerity to make the Epira work successfully for consumers. Competition in the Philippine power sector remains an illusion. Not even the Joint Congressional Power Commission (JCPC) tasked, among other things, "to determine inherent weaknesses in the law and recommend necessary remedial legislation or executive measures" has shown itself sincere in acting on Epira's weaknesses and strengthening the law. Some legislators even take pleasure, during Senate hearings, in "grilling" invited resource persons from energy agencies, instead of affably coming up with feasible solutions.

Still, we look upon the JCPC as a positive catalyst and dispenser of reforms in the power sector.

—PETE L. ILAGAN,
president, Nasecore,
Tambo, Parañaque City

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This American feels so ashamed

AS AN AMERICAN LUCKY ENOUGH TO be assigned in the Philippines, I would like to say how sorry I am that the "Nicole" rape happened. I have lived here for two years and have felt very fortunate to be here.

I know it is a difficult thing to stand up for what you believe in; if it were easy, everyone would do it. The soldiers who were involved in that incident should have all been punished. Even those who just stood by and let it happen, they too should be made accountable.

I hope the Philippine government will not give in to the request/demand of turning Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith over to US custody. He committed a crime and should be made to pay—whether this incident happened in Manila or New York.

If this message makes it to the United States, I would like the Americans there to know that most of the Filipinos here in the Philippines are having a hard life. Still, they face life with a smile and dignity; their culture is different from ours, but it is not less than ours.

In many ways they are more civilized, much more pleasant, and forgiving. For this group of US officials (that is exactly what they are, representatives of the American people) to gang-rape a woman in this peace-loving democratic country is appalling to me and to anyone else who holds our American heritage dear.

I am close to 50 years old, the son of a career soldier and this is the first time I felt this much shame as an American.

God Bless America!

—LLOYD MONK,
lloyd_monk@yahoo.com

Better as US justice secretary

JUDGE BENJAMIN POZON SHOULD replace Raul Gonzalez as justice secretary. As an Ilonggo, I am thoroughly ashamed of Gonzalez's subservience to the United States.

Maybe, Gonzalez should apply for the position of justice secretary of the United States.

—RAFAEL SANTOS,
chipper_san@yahoo.com

Saving Cuenco from 'politics of going-along'

CEBU CITY REP. ANTONIO CUENCO MUST have thought that, by apologizing for his mistake in voting for Charter change through a Senate-less constituent assembly, he is already off the hook. Instead, his apology prompted criticism from Msgr. Achilles Dakay, media liaison officer for the Cebu Archdiocese, who noted that Cuenco had compromised integrity and ideological independence with partisan loyalty.

Cuenco's explanation as to why he went with his colleagues in the Con-ass joy ride is not only a lame excuse but also an insincere apology. A lame excuse because it does not simply paint an atrocious portrait of partisan and patronage politics in the Philippines; it also depicts the willingness of our present breed of congressmen to sacrifice their statesmanship in order to play a dirty political game that is Cha-cha. It is an insincere apology because despite his admission of guilt, Cuenco still remains in power as a member of the disgraceful House of Representatives.

If Cuenco is really sincere in his apology, he should resign from his post, thus vindicating himself from his mistakes and regaining the integrity he lost in playing the politics of going along.

—MAX TAN,
alaric_max@yahoo.com

PVAO congratulated for prompt pensions

BEFORE RETIRED COMMODORE ROGELIO Dayan was appointed Philippine Veterans Affairs Office administrator, quite a number of World War II veterans, including myself, complained a lot about delayed monthly PVAO pensions. After he became the PVAO administrator, there have never been such delays. As a matter of fact, there have been times when we received our pensions within the last two weeks of the month, before they became due.

In view thereof, I wish to express my gratitude for the remarkable improvement in the release of the monthly PVAO pensions. I also would like to congratulate Dayan and all the PVAO officials and employees for the efficient service they are now rendering.

More power to them! May they and the members of their families have a blessed, holy and prosperous New Year!

May all government officials and employees be like them. May God bless our nation, so that next year we will have less divisive politics and less corruption in government.

Most of all, may there be less killings and terrorist acts, and may we have peace!

—ISIDORO A. PANLASIGUI JR.,
6 Big Horseshoe Drive, Quezon City

Priests must undergo 'character change' too

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR-SANTIAGO IS right. In calling for character change instead of Charter change, the Catholic Church hierarchy in the Philippines should first admit its failure to inculcate Catholic values among Filipinos.

The Dec. 17 prayer rally only revealed that we Filipinos address every pressing national problem and issue by using passion instead of reason.

I always believe that Christ wants the clergy to lead in promoting love and brotherhood. Sadly enough, some priests, and even a few bishops, add to the chaos and misunderstanding in Philippine society today. They even encourage the use of violence to change governments.

They should first address the "character change" message to themselves before they preach it to others.

—ROMULO VITOR,
re_vitor@yahoo.com

New clothes for bad-smelling leaders

IT IS USELESS TO REVISE OR AMEND the Constitution if the same "dramatis personae" manning the government now will continue to "serve" as our "leaders."

Such an exercise can be likened to a man who has not taken a bath for many days, changing to new clothes; his body odor will stay and he will smell miles and miles around.

—PAUL R. MORTEL,
MBLA Court, Malanday, Marikina City

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New Year sends prices skyrocketing

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—AS PRICES OF FRUITS, vegetables and meat in this Pampanga capital rise by 5 to 50 percent in days before the New Year revelry, Teresita Calma said she would forego the traditional media noche for her family.

"*Makipanggan na kami mu kareng kamag-anak* (We will just partake of food in our relatives' houses)," Calma said of her plan as she checked out stalls selling ingredients for the *chopsuey* (mixed vegetables) she wanted to cook for lunch on Wednesday.

The assorted vegetables that filled half a small plastic bag cost her P45. The viand would go again without pork, she said. Else, the P150 income her husband was expected to make that day from driving a pedicab would all be gone, Calma said.

She also skipped the *chicharo* (beans) sold at P160 a kilogram. Cabbage cost P30 a piece while garlic fetched P60 a kg.

Vendor Stella Sevilla said prices that day were still not too high. Sevilla expected a 10-20 percent increase in vegetable prices in as New Year draws closer, mainly due to the high demand.

Calma said she could not afford to overspend during the holidays.

"Life is hard," said Calma, who is pregnant with her sixth child.

At the old public market's fruit section, vendor Carmencita Napao was hard put explaining the new prices to her regular customers.

She said a distributor's prices went at P1,350 per 10 kg of grapes or almost double the cost on Monday. Apples, which used to fetch P650 per box of 88 pieces, went for P750. The price of 100 pieces of ponkan oranges rose to P480 from P400. Sunkist oranges went for P850 from P550 for 72 pieces.

Napao had to shell out an additional P120 for every 96 pieces of pears that she bought for only P400 last week.

"Prices [of fruits] usually go up during New Year. What can I do? Traders dictate the prices," she said.

She took the fruits anyway, hoping that her customers would still buy these in keeping with the tradition of collecting 12 kinds of round fruits.

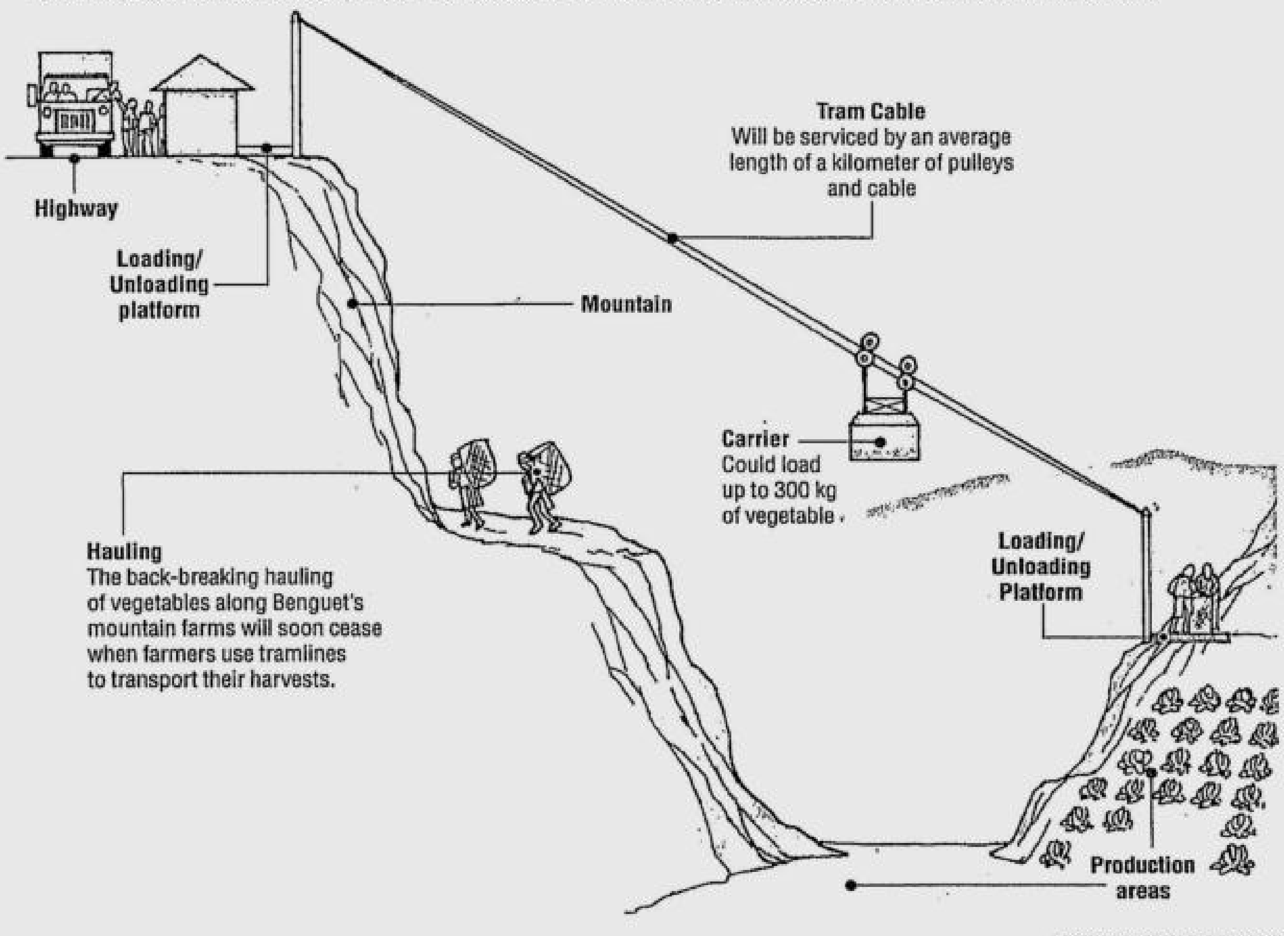
While chicken sold for P110-130 a kg and pork at P130-160 a kg, *bangus* (milkfish) went for P110 a kg on Wednesday. Prices of fish rose because there was little supply after Christmas, said Edu Yangco.

"Fish prices will go down on New Year because pork and chicken are more in demand then," said Yangco who has seen this trend in the last 20 years.

"We're going to do better after the holidays when people prefer fish for meals," he said. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Benguet's P40M Tramline Project

The entire project funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency would benefit 4 towns with 3,873 households.


Tram Cable
Will be serviced by an average length of a kilometer of pulleys and cable
Highway
Loading/ Unloading platform
Mountain
Carrier
Could load up to 300 kg of vegetable
Hauling
The back-breaking hauling of vegetables along Benguet's mountain farms will soon cease when farmers use tramlines to transport their harvests.
Loading/ Unloading Platform
Production areas

INQFOGRAPHICS: ERNIE SAMBO

FAST FACTS

650,950 metric tons of vegetables, corn, palay and fruits are produce every year.

1.5 million vegetables are traded daily at the La Trinidad Vegetable Trading Post alone in the Benguet capital.

79,000 households rely on farming in the province.

95 percent of more than 537 million kilograms of vegetables that are hauled to Manila every year from La Trinidad are produced in Benguet.

24,531 hectares of farms are used for vegetable and other crop production in Benguet.

Source: Benguet provincial agricultural office, DA-Cordillera, Agribusiness Marketing Assistance Services

Tramlines to ease hauling of Benguet veggies

By Delmar Cariño
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ATOK, BENGUET—THE BACK-breaking hauling of vegetables along Benguet's mountain farms will soon cease to be an uphill battle when farmers use tramlines to transport their harvests from the farm to the road.

The Department of Agriculture is set to operate early next year four tramlines in Atok town, each costing P1.35 million, while the Department of Agrarian Reform will launch five tramline projects in Bakun town worth P3 million.

The DA Cordillera said the tramlines in Atok would benefit farmers in Barangays Bucao, Abiang, Topdac and Awidi, each of which will be serviced by an average length of a kilometer of pulleys and cables.

Tramlines

"The tramlines are ready to be operated by the farmers. Each tramline could load up to 300 kilograms of vegetables. Vehicle engines were bought to serve as winch or pullers," said Gaston Cael, an agriculturist.

Cael said the projects were all completed in coordination with the DA's Bureau of Post Harvest Research and Extension (BPHRE).

The DAR, meanwhile, said it intended to build tramlines in the vegetable farms of Barangays Ampusongan, Gambang, Bago, Dalipey and Sinakbat in Bakun town worth P3.1 million.

Adela Comila, Bakun agrarian reform officer, said the town's tramlines represented the first phase of a P40-million tramline project in the province funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency.

Vegetable capital

Comila said the entire project would benefit 3,873 households in Bakun, Atok and Kibungan towns who are tilling more than 4,800 hectares of farmland producing 183,215 metric tons of vegetables per cropping.

These towns produce cucumber, carrot, cabbage, garden pea, radish, lettuce and potato.

Jude Gawigawen, Benguet agrarian reform officer, said the tramlines would boost the province's role as the country's salad bowl and enhance its importance in the North Luzon agribusiness growth quadrangle, one of the super regions tagged by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The tramlines will reduce hauling cost, energy and time. The cables will provide a faster link between upland farms and the main road leading to the trading post," he said.

"It will also remove the dependence on the 'comboy' (porter) system of hauling vegetables that usually employed child labor," he said.

Earlier use

An agricultural tramline is a hauling facility that is made of cables, pulleys, carriers, posts, power house and loading and unloading platforms.

Tramlines were first used to transport timber in logging concessions and mining companies.

Patricio Ananayo, head of the DA's regional agribusiness marketing assistance services, said the first monocable tramline in the province was built in Atok in 1998.

Some farmers redesigned their own tramline systems using indigenous materials, like big boulders and trees as anchor and big nylon ropes as cables, but they were not durable, he said.

Self-help

Later, he said, the farmers developed the "jig back" type, which was semi-manually operated since the ropes were attached to a truck that acts as puller.

Now, there are around 100 tramlines all over the province made by the farmers themselves and by the government, Ananayo said.

The tramlines proved successful since these were also used to transport groceries and farm inputs to the households, he said.

Former Agriculture Secretary Angelito Sarmiento said the average investment cost of a kilometer of a tramline is P1 million.

"A farm-to-market road of the same length would be 11 times costlier," he said.

Suitable

The BPHRE said a tramline would be suitable for hauling vegetables from an upland production area of about 10 hectares.

The cable path must not, however, cross a power line, residential area or water pipes and it could cross farms as far as 3 km as long as it would not sag too low to touch any obstruction.

Gawigawen said the DAR tramlines in the province involved the construction of 11 units of tramlines crossing over 42 stations.

The combined length of tramlines in Atok and Bakun alone would measure close to 30,000 meters and would service 1,920 has of commercially developed agricultural farms.

Atok, Bakun and Kibungan towns were chosen as initial sites because they have the highest and lowest farm altitudes from the national road.

Benguet board protests minor role of experts

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE provincial board is up in arms over the Bureau of Plant Industry's decision to consider only as observers the two Benguet State University plant disease experts who joined a pest risk analysis (PRA) team that inspected carrot farms in China from Sept. 18 to 28.

The board members expected Dr. Asuncion Nagpala and Jocelyn Perez to be recognized as official members of the team that included BPI and University of the Philippines experts.

The team would come up with a pest and disease management system for Chinese carrots before they are allowed to enter the country.

In a resolution approved recently, the officials also junked the PRA report that the team submitted to the Department of Agriculture for approval.

They said that except for some revisions, the report was actually a rehash of a previous PRA report they earlier questioned.

"We vehemently protest the results of all PRA conducted on Chinese carrots by the PRA team that went to China," the resolution said.

The officials said the reason the province asked for BSU experts to become part of the team was to ensure that they were allowed to participate in the pest risk analysis by lending their expertise and giving their recommendations.

Nagpala and Perez were part of the BSU pool of experts that evaluated in 2005 the first BPI PRA report on Chinese carrots.

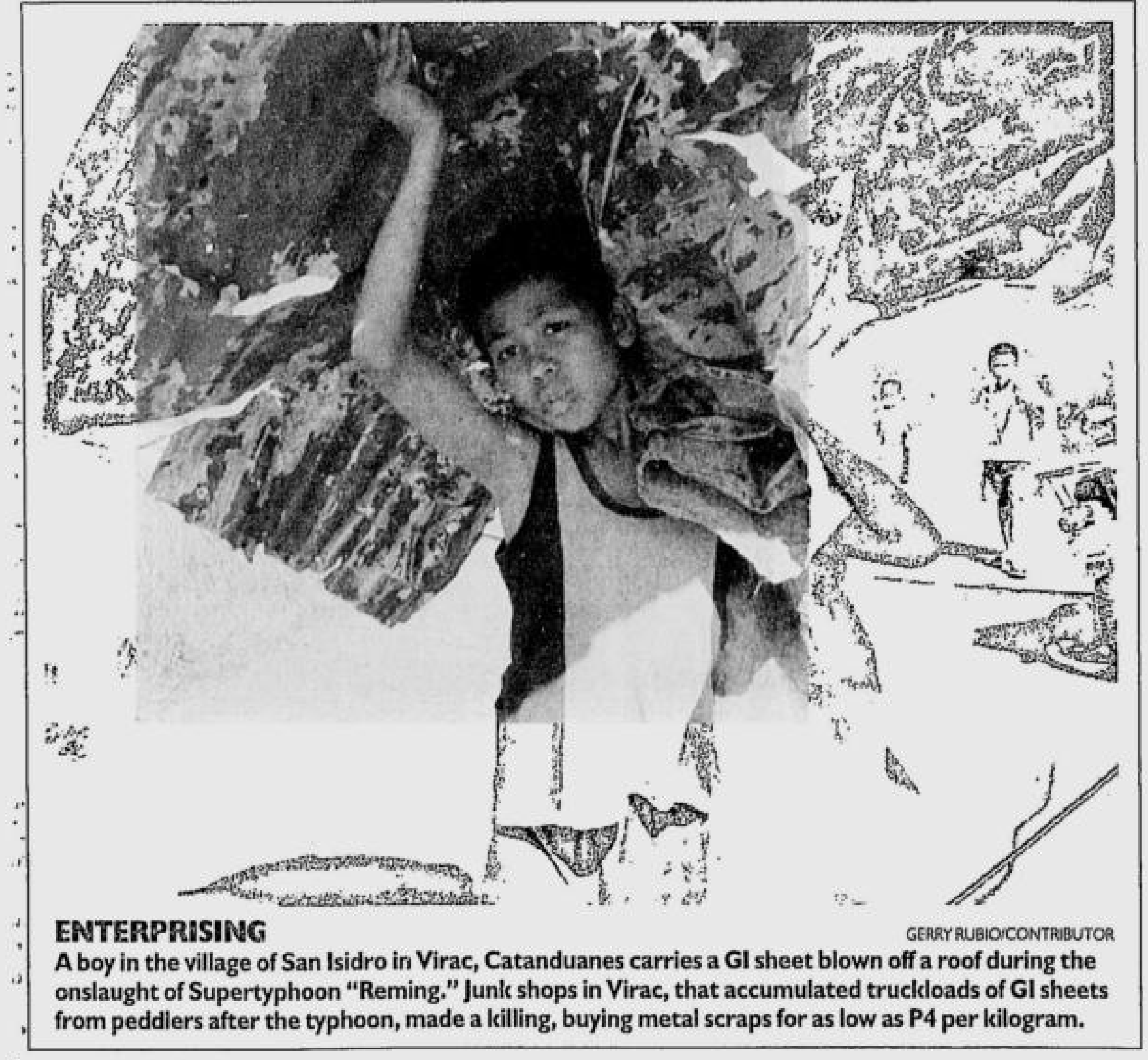
The BSU team reported the presence of 12 pests and diseases in Chinese carrots that could potentially harm the province's vegetable industry and ecosystem.

The team's findings prompted officials here to ask the agriculture department for another PRA but BSU experts must be made part of the team.

The DA and the BPI accommodated Nagpala and Perez who were recommended by BSU officials.

But the board members were stunned when Perez reported that while she and Nagpala went with the team to China in September, they were merely considered as technical observers whose suggestions may or may not be accepted by the PRA team.

This led the officials to conclude that no PRA then was actually conducted and accused BPI of presenting a PRA which merely repeated the contents of a 2004 report that they protested against. *Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



ENTERPRISING GERRY RUBIO/CONTRIBUTOR

A boy in the village of San Isidro in Virac, Catanduanes carries a GI sheet blown off a roof during the onslaught of Supertyphoon "Reming." Junk shops in Virac, that accumulated truckloads of GI sheets from peddlers after the typhoon, made a killing, buying metal scraps for as low as P4 per kilogram.

Guimaras Church, environment groups say cleanup incomplete

By Nestor Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—CHURCH GROUPS and residents of villages that suffered from the Petron oil spill have called for a boycott of Petron products until the oil firm completes the cleanup of areas contaminated by the oil sludge.

The groups, led by the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) of the St. Vincent Ferrer in Nueva Valencia town in Guimaras, said the cleanup was not complete as claimed by Petron and an inter-agency task force.

"It is painful for us residents of Nueva Valencia to hear such statements knowing that there are still areas which remain to be cleaned," PPC president Antonio Amil Chan told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Chan said at least 30 percent of the oil sludge that reached the shores of Nueva Valencia town after MT Solar I sank on Aug. 11 remains unclean. Nueva Valencia is the worst hit of the five towns of Guimaras.

Chan said that in the island-village of Guiwanon, 220 sacks of oil-contaminated debris that were collected by clean-up teams, have not been removed. The debris was supposed to be transported by barges to the Holcim Cement Plant in Lugait town in Misamis Oriental.

But a boycott of Petron will be counter productive because this will not hasten the cleanup, said Carlos Tan, Petron's spokesperson on the oil spill.

Tan, reached by phone yesterday, also said it would be "impossible to remove the oil 100 percent" even as he insisted that they have cleaned up 180 km of coastline in Guimaras.

He said Petron would continue the cleanup if the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will certify that there are areas that still need cleaning. He said teams have already collected 6,000 metric tons of debris.

Petron, the regional inter-agency task force Solar I Oil Spill and the National Disaster Coordinating Council, earlier said that the physical cleanup, especially of the shoreline, has been completed.

Petron hired around 1,000 residents for P300 per day in the cleanup operations. But work stopped months ago because the oil firm said it was already completed.

The residents who were earlier evacuated for health and safety risks have also been allowed to return to their homes.

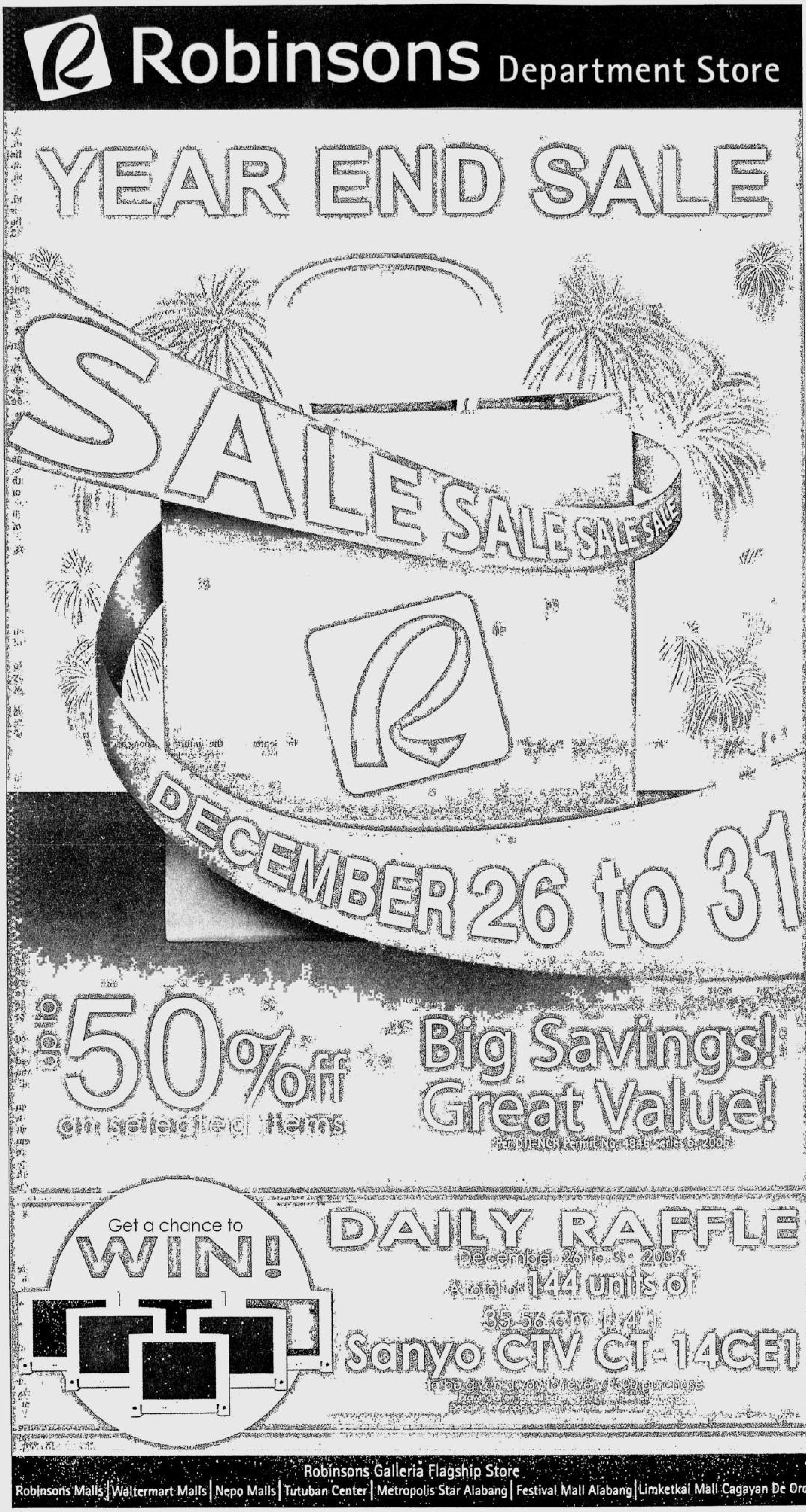
The efforts of agencies have been shifted to rehabilitation because of this assessment.

But Chan said the government and Petron should stop issuing "irresponsible statements."

In a manifesto issued in Guimaras yesterday, the Church group, along with environmental groups and residents, demanded the total cleanup of the areas by Petron.

"Petron is running away from its obligations of totally cleaning Guimaras. A huge volume of oil is still buried in the shores of Barangays San Roque, Lucmayan, San Antonio, Tando, Lapaz, Cabalagnan and Guiwanon with patches of mangroves already dying in said areas," the manifesto said.

The groups said that Petron should be held accountable for "their own negligence in ensuring seaworthy contracted carriers."



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Police arrest GenSan rapists

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police said they have taken into custody two of the three suspects in last month's rape-slaying of 16-year-old Kryzel Diestro.

Senior Supt. Willie Dangane, head of the Task Force Diestro, told reporters here on Wednesday they have considered the case solved.

He said charges have already been filed against suspects Gabriel Cutamora, Jojo Momo and Eric Deocariza.

Momo earlier surrendered while Deocariza was arrested on Tuesday.

Dangane said only Cutamora remains at large.

Momo had confessed he was among those who gang-raped Diestro, a graduating high school student at the Lagao National High School here.

In his confession, Momo claimed it was Cutamora, a pedicab driver, who brought Diestro home. The girl knew Cutamora.

He said they took turns sexually abusing the girl before Cutamora strangled her to death.

Momo said Diestro's body was placed in a sack and dumped at a vacant lot.

Dangane said they recovered pieces of evidence, which could boost the case against the suspects, from Cutamora's house in San Isidro village.

Councilor Lourdes Casabuena, chair of the committee on women and family, praised the police for their determination in solving the Diestro case.

Rapists

But in Bansalan, Davao del Sur, authorities are still baffled on the identity of a group of motorcycle-riding men sexually attacking women.

The group had already killed at least three women after sexually molesting them.

The attacks—which also alarmed Bishop Guillermo Afable of the Diocese of Digos—have prompted the provincial police to organize a special body to solve the cases.

On Tuesday last week, the group nearly killed another victim.

The would-be victim, a 14-year-old resident of Barangay Marber, is now recuperating in a hospital.

The girl said she was inside their house with her grandfather when she heard knocks on the door around 7 p.m.

She said she opened the door and was terrified to see knife-wielding suspects. About five others, she said, were lurking near a tree.

The girl said the two men immediately grabbed her and covered her face with a stinky handkerchief.

"I tried to hold my breath to avoid losing consciousness and I fought back. They overpowered me," she told the INQUIRER.

Aquiles Zonio and Eldie Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao

DNA test key to Janjalani identification

From page A1

Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa.

But a prison insider told the INQUIRER last night that Hector, who is serving a 40-year sentence for kidnapping, had refused to be subjected to tests.

"I hope it's Janjalani but as I said, there is no confirmation yet until the tests are complete," Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said.

Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban, chief of the Marine brigade whose men unearthed on Wednesday the body suspected to be that of Janjalani, said samples had been taken from the body and brought to Manila for DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) testing, a process of identifying individuals through matching of genetic characteristics.

"It's easy because we have another Janjalani (Hector) who is detained," Sabban said. "We can also get a sample from him to confirm if indeed the decomposing cadaver is really Khadaffy."

"We really need forensic examination ... We are also seeking help from the United States to include the sample from Hector Janjalani," Sabban added.

Lussenhop said it would be too early to speculate as to what would become of the $5-million price on Janjalani's head.

"It is best not to speculate on the reward now. We can address that if identity is confirmed," Lussenhop said.

Soldiers are usually not included in the reward since going after military targets is part of their job.

Sabban said a civilian informant and four Abu Sayyaf surrenderees helped in locating Janjalani's supposed burial ground.

Sabban said the informant personally conducted the last rites for Janjalani before he was buried in Sitio Kan-udan in Barangay Kabuntakas, Patikul town, on Sept. 5.

Shot in the neck

The Abu Sayyaf surrenderees claimed they were the ones who buried Janjalani the day after he was killed in a clash with government troops on Luba Hills in Patikul.

Sabban said Janjalani was hit in the neck, causing his instant death.

He said the informant claimed that Janjalani wore a pajama and a T-shirt when he was buried.

"Before they buried him in a shallow grave of about 3 feet deep, they paid homage, *sinilip kung saan ang tama* (looked at where he was hit) and accorded him the last respect through prayers," Sabban said.

Muslim robes

Esperon said the person who pointed to Janjalani's alleged grave "claims to know Janjalani."

He said the remains were in an "advanced state of decomposition" and were covered in ceremonial Muslim burial clothes.

No personal belongings that could identify the body were found in the grave, he added.

Esperon also said it was too early to talk about who would share in the reward as the remains have not been identified.

He pointed out that the reward was for anyone who would give information that could lead to the capture or neutralization of the target.

"That's different from (getting) information that could point to the grave site. So we will thresh that (issue). I have not received the full report," Esperon said.

DNA test

The Philippine National Police (PNP) Crime Lab said it had received a request to conduct a DNA test on the remains but lab head Chief Supt. Arturo Cacdac said they had yet to start the process of testing.

"We have just received the request. But we have not started it yet because we have not received the samples," Cacdac said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said at a news briefing that forensic experts were set to conduct a bone marrow test to determine if the body was indeed that of Janjalani.

They will do this by taking a sample from one member of Janjalani's family and Hector will be approached for this test, Ermita said.

A source inside the New Bilibid Prisons told the INQUIRER last night that personnel from the Scene of the Crime Operatives section of Camp Crame arrived at the prison at around 2 p.m. to perform DNA tests on Hector.

Janjalani's brother was called to the control gate of the maximum compound and the Camp Crame personnel tried to convince him to submit himself to testing.

But Hector refused.

"When I was arrested, I was willing to undergo drug tests but you laughed at me. Now, you are asking me [to submit myself] to another test," the source quoted Hector as saying.

An NBP official had informed Hector that he had the right to refuse to undergo the test.

"*Ayaw niya dahil hindi niya alam ang puno't dulo nito. Baka palabasin na positive ang resulta* (He refused because he did not know what it was all about. He was concerned that they might try to produce a positive result)," the source added.

Supt. Joselito Rodrigo, chief of the medico-legal section of the Crime Lab, told the INQUIRER that DNA comparison is usually done on samples from the parents and children of the subject.

But in the event that the parents and children are not available, samples can be taken from the subject's siblings.

Results in weeks

In the case of Janjalani, a sample from his brother Hector will be needed.

"We can establish if they are siblings. But we will not know if that is really Khadaffy Janjalani. At least, we will get a positive result that they are siblings," Rodrigo told the INQUIRER.

Usually, DNA samples are taken from the subjects' muscle, hair, mucous discharges from the mouth and bones, depending on the state of their decomposition, Rodrigo said.

Once a sample is extracted, they will run this through their DNA machine. Results can be made available from 30 to 45 days.

Rodrigo also said the crime lab had not previously taken DNA samples from both Hector and Khadaffy despite the fact that they were at one time detained inside Camp Crame.

Hereditary characteristics

According to materials from the PNP Crime Lab on DNA profiling, DNA is the hereditary chemical that makes up a person's chromosomes. It carries the person's genetic code which determines characteristics like height or the color of our eyes.

DNA is made up of four chemicals—adenine, thymine, cytosine and guanine—called bases. These bases are paired like teeth in a zipper. There are millions of base pairs in DNA but every person, except identical twins, will have his or her own pattern of base pairs. *With reports from Jocelyn R. Uy, Volt Contreras, Christine O. Avendaño*

FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists

Osama bin Laden - Reward: Up to $25 million

Ayman Al-Zawahiri - Up to $25 million

Adam Yahiye Gadahn - Up to $1 million

Those with a $5 million-dollar bounty (maximum) on their head are:

Abdelkarim Hussein Mohamed Al-Nasser
Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah
Ali Atwa
Anas Al-Liby
Fazul Abdullah Mohammed
Hasan Izz-Al-Din
Ahmed Mohammed Hamed Ali
Imad Fayez Mugniyah
Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan
Abdul Rahman Yasin
Fahid Mohammed Ally Msalam
Ahmad Ibrahim Al-Mughassil
Ali Saed Bin Ali El-Hoorie
Saif Al-Adel
Ibrahim Salih Mohammed Al-Yacoub
***Khadaffy Abubakar Janjalani**
***Isnilon Totoni Hapilon**
***Jainal Antel Sali Jr.**
Jamel Ahmed Mohammed Ali Al-Badawi
Jaber A. Elbaneh
***Filipinos**

Note: Al Qaida leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who had a $25-million bounty on his head, was killed last June in a US air strike in Iraq. In a CNN interview, US ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said he did not know of anyone eligible for the reward, adding the information on al-Zarqawi's location had come from arrested Al Qaida members. *Inquirer Research*

'If dead, it proves RP winning war on terror'

From page A1

he told reporters.

"I hope it's true that it's really Janjalani," Ermita said, referring to the decomposing body which Marines had unearthed in the jungles of Jolo the other day.

But Ermita dismissed the possibility that the death of Janjalani would mean the end of the Abu Sayyaf terror group.

He noted that there were still four or five big-time Abu Sayyaf leaders on the run and subjects of a military manhunt. He named Isnilon Hapilon and Radulan Sahiron as among them.

Ermita stressed that the military offensive against the other Abu Sayyaf leaders would continue.

He said that Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon sounded positive that Khadaffy Janjalani was dead.

"General Esperon was upbeat (about it)," Ermita said after the military reported to the Palace the discovery of the remains thought to be those of the Abu Sayyaf leader.

He said that Esperon told him about Janjalani's possible demise based on a report sent by a Marine unit who recovered the body.

Ermita said the possibility that Janjalani was really dead arose because of earlier information that Janjalani was wounded in an encounter with soldiers in September.

"*Harinawa naman ay totoo eto* (Let's hope to God it is true)," Ermita said.

Ermita said that surely if Janjalani was still alive he would have come out by now to deny reports of his death.

Janjalani is the younger brother of the Abu Sayyaf's late founder Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, who was shot dead by police on the island of Basilan in 1998.

AT EASE: Janjalani (2nd from left) congregate with fellow Abu Sayyaf rebels inside their jungle hideout in Sulu in July 2000. INQUIRER PHOTO

Sabban optimistic

The Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for the Philippines' worst terror attack in February 2004 when a bomb crippled a ferry near Manila, killing more than 100 people, and for coordinated Valentine's Day bombings in Manila and Mindanao in 2005 that killed several people.

"We are optimistic it's Janjalani's cadaver," Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban, chief of the 3rd Marine Brigade based in Sulu, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"We have basis and physical proof, but we still need the scientific evidence through DNA testing to confirm that the decomposing body really belongs to the ASG leader," Sabban said.

Esperon prefers to wait

But Esperon sounded cautious, telling reporters he preferred to wait for forensic tests to confirm the military's fondest wish. Esperon said although Janjalani's death would have a "major impact" on the rebel group, it would not spell the end of the Abu Sayyaf.

"We have to go after the other members. We have to talk to the people so that they will not support such group (of) kidnappers and terrorists," he said.

No letup

Despite the discovery of Janjalani's alleged remains, Esperon said troops deployed in Sulu since Aug. 1 had not let up on their pursuit operations.

"If it is Janjalani, this is a big point against terrorism," he said. "If it's not, you can be sure our troops will continue their operations. Indeed the operations are going very well."

"We're very cautious not to preempt the result of the forensic examination, although we have reliable information (about the remains)," Marine spokesperson Lt. Col. Ariel Caculitan said.

He said the information about Janjalani's alleged grave was volunteered to them.

In September, the military said it had received reports that Janjalani was among those wounded in a fierce three-hour battle between Abu Sayyaf rebels and Marine troops in Patikul, Sulu.

Caculitan said their troops could not confirm then that Janjalani had been killed since no one could lead the troops to the exact location of his grave.

Military dragnet

In August 2004, the military also claimed that Janjalani was killed in an air raid in Liguasan marsh in Central Mindanao.

A year later, in October 2005, Janjalani and the two Indonesian suspected masterminds of the Bali bombings, Dulmatin and Omar Patek, were reported to have escaped a military dragnet in Talayan, Maguindanao.

The military renewed its pursuit operations against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu on Aug. 1.

Ermita said that Esperon had told him the military was checking its operations in Sulu last September.

"They are trying to review the conduct of the operations by the Marines last September—where these took place and the casualty figures to support the report that Janjalani may have been killed in that operation," Ermita said.

But the governors of Basilan and Sulu wanted more proof of Janjalani's supposed death.

"I need concrete evidence to convince me that that body really belongs to Khadaffy," Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong said.

"It is difficult to say (he is dead) until after we get concrete confirmation from experts," Loong added.

High-profile kidnaps

"The cadaver should be shown to the people who really know Janjalani. Right now I cannot refute or confirm the (Marines) report," Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar said.

Akbar called on Janjalani's relatives to say if the body indeed belonged to the bandit leader.

Janjalani is believed to be 31.

In the late 1990s, the Abu Sayyaf became notorious for a series of high-profile kidnaps and high ransoms paid for the freedom of Western tourists.

Janjalani has been indicted by a US court for the kidnap and killing of American missionary Martin Burnham in 2002, who was abducted along with his wife and held by the Abu Sayyaf for over a year.

Janjalani, who has named himself after Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi, is believed to have been leading the Abu Sayyaf back to its Islamic militant roots.

Abu Sayyaf leaders have been mostly pinned down on Jolo island in recent months, with about 6,000 soldiers hunting them down. US commando teams are providing intelligence to Philippine troops on the ground. *With a report from Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao and Reuters*

RP's Internet, phone capacity cut by 40 percent

From page A1

Globe Telecom said its services to the United States were the most affected by the tremors.

In an advisory, Globe said it was "doing everything possible" to fully restore its services to the United States, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

Rerouting

Smart Communications Inc. has said that its broadband Internet service, SmartBro, has been normalized. It said it also restored international roaming services to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Yemen.

In a statement, PLDT said it was rerouting affected connections to hasten restoration of normal service.

It said it was communicating with the international consortia operating the damaged cable systems off Taiwan.

The consortia have mobilized cable ships to repair the affected segments.

Netopia customers

The reduction in Internet capacity adversely affected the operations of Internet cafés.

Adeste Bordones Garbe, supervisor for Netopia Internet Café's branch in Makati Cinema Square, said most customers had difficulty accessing the Yahoo! website.

DSL service apparently improved yesterday but remained patchy, with Gmail and Google becoming more difficult to access.

As a result, about 50 percent of prospective customers turned away upon hearing of continued access problems. Nearly all of those who tried to access the Internet cut short their rental time.

Inquirer.net

JV Rufino, editor in chief of Inquirer.net, said the news website was not too badly affected because around three-fourths of its readers were outside the Philippines, mostly based in the United States where the site's servers are located.

"Only readers in the Philippines itself and in the Southeast Asian region would have experienced difficulty reaching the site," Rufino said.

"As it was, our traffic that day during the peak of the problem was down only 7 percent from the hour before the problems started," he said.

"In terms of our own operations, we update the website from Manila so we did experience some difficulties in transmitting updated information to our US servers. That lasted about half an hour," he said.

Inquirer.net's team of online reporters, who file most of the breaking news for the site, also experienced some difficulties due to Internet congestion but they managed to file promptly nonetheless using their Blackberries.

Call centers

Business process outsourcing companies in the Philippines did not report major downtimes, Mitch Locsin, executive director of Business Processing Association of the Philippines, said.

Locsin said that he knew of only two centers that were totally shut down due to the problems.

The Contact Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP) said the effect of the problem on the sector was minimal because call centers were debilitated for about only an hour.

CCAP executive director Jojo Uligan said the timing mitigated the impact as the disruption occurred during the Christmas holidays.

Asked when call centers would revert to their pre-quake status, he said it was hard to tell.

"Some were able to recover fully a few hours after the general downtime while others were able to operate partially since then and some others are still down," Uligan said.

CCAP groups 27 contact centers, including Pilipinas Teleserve, Logicall, Convergys, eTelecare and PeopleSupport.

Some 179,000 people work at call centers in the country.

Analysts said the service disruption—caused by the rupture of two undersea data transmission cables in Tuesday's earthquake in Taiwan—highlights how crucial the cable and Internet infrastructure has become to the modern world.

A decade ago, telephones and faxes were essential to businesses and governments. Now, telephone lines often take second place, piggybacking on networks set up for Internet or mobile communication.

"Governments now recognize these industries as fundamental infrastructure, equal to electricity, water, sewage, roads," said Markus Buchhorn, an information technology expert at Australia National University. "So if you do have a major breakdown, people will move heaven and earth to fix it." *With reports from AFP and AP*

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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil**

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GETTING READY Vendors in Cubao, Quezon City sell different kinds of fireworks and firecrackers to welcome the New Year.
JOAN BONDOC

Slay suspect faces twin raps

Gunman tagged in killing of OSG lawyer, son

By Margaux C. Ortiz

DOUBLE MURDER CHARGES WILL BE FILED today against the alleged killer of a lawyer working for the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) and his son.

The charges will be filed by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the Parañaque City Prosecutor's Office.

NBI National Capital Region (NCR) chief Ruel Lasala said investigators were certain suspect Christopher Garcia, alias Benjamin Bermudez, 27, was the gunman. Two witnesses in the custody of NBI Special Task Force (STF) chief Arnel Dalumpines positively identified Garcia as one of the suspects.

Nestor Ballocillo, 57, and his son Benedict, 23, were on their way to the elder Ballocillo's office in Makati City on Dec. 6 when they were cornered by two suspects on Hernandez Avenue, Valley 1, Barangay San Antonio, Parañaque City. The victims were shot in the head at close range, according to scene of the crime operatives. Three spent shells of a .45 caliber pistol were recovered from the site.

Garcia was arrested two weeks later at the Philippine General Hospital where he was being treated for gunshot wounds. Police earlier said Garcia was wounded in a robbery in Parañaque on Dec. 20.

Authorities checked on Garcia after informants told police they overheard the alleged gunman bragging during a drinking spree that he shot the Ballocillos. "Garcia is a notorious criminal with a string of cases including murder and robbery," Lasala said.

The NBI official said Ballocillo's killing was similar to the assassination of Pasay Regional Trial Court Judge Henrick Gingoyon in Dasmariñas, Cavite a year ago.

Garcia is now in the custody of the Dasmariñas police who filed a robbery with homicide case against the suspect a few years ago.

The NBI and PNP have launched a manhunt for the second suspect, known only as Tano.

New Nayon to rise with new year

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE BAGONG NAYONG PILIPINO WILL start to take shape in early 2007 on a 15-hectare site near Aseana and Belle Avenues and Bay Boulevard in Pasay City's reclamation area.

It will replace the 37-year-old Nayong Pilipino heritage park that had to give way to the expansion of the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, which remains closed.

Charito Planas, executive director of the Nayong Pilipino Foundation, told the INQUIRER that they and the Philippine Reclamation Authority (former Public Estates Authority) signed yesterday a memorandum of agreement that would allow work to begin at the new site.

Planas said adjustments on the value of bidding contracts awarded to private companies two years ago had to be made and accredited by the National Economic and Development Authority.

The development of the new theme park, which will have new and interactive attractions, will start with excavation work and drilling for water pipelines and power lines.

Boracay's white sands; Palawan's caves, waterfalls and underground rivers; the Taal Volcano and the sugar plantations of Cebu and Negros would be replicated in the new heritage park, according to the master plan prepared in 2002 by then University of Santo Tomas architecture students Jason Buensalido and Karen Cheung.

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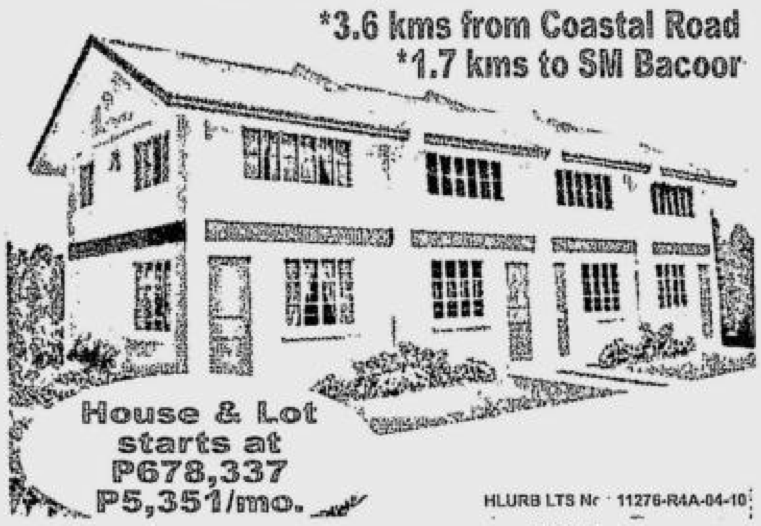

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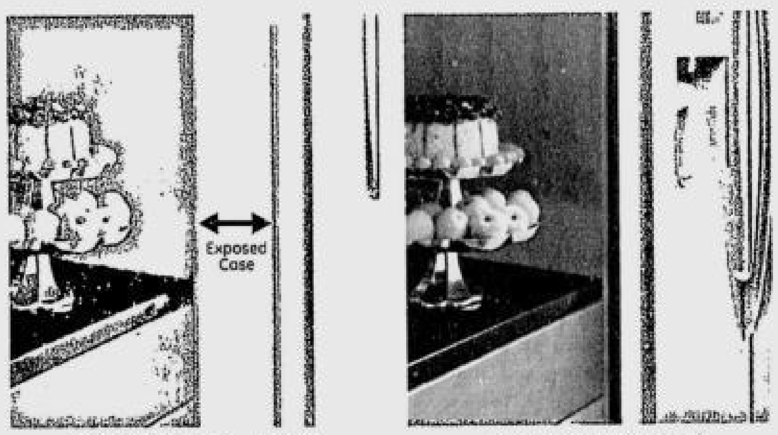
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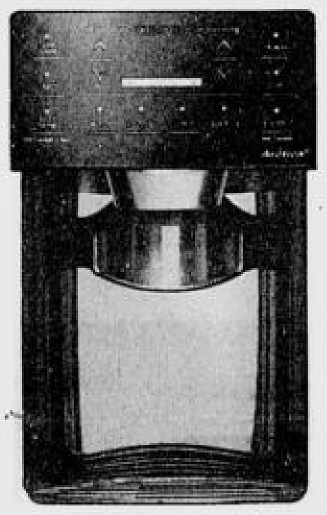

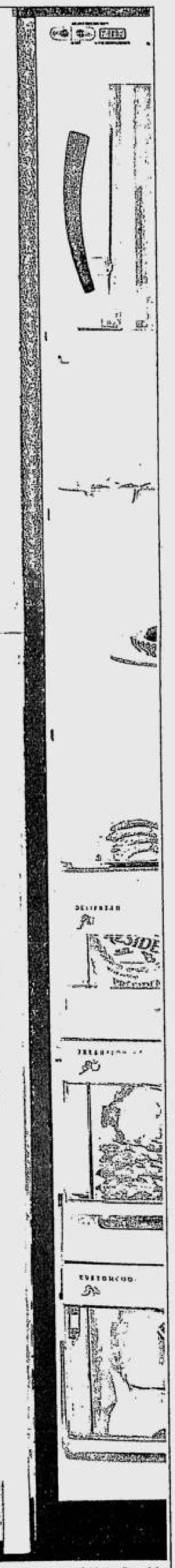

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Alleged violators of Clean Water Act may be charged

By Norman Bordadora

THE CONTRACTOR OF A TRUCK THAT ALlegedly dumped chemical wastes on a farm in Marilao, Bulacan in November may be charged with violation of the Clean Water Act.

The filing of charges was recommended yesterday by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes also approved the recommendation of the Pollution and Adjudication Board (PAB) that similar charges be filed against the truck driver and helper contracted by Rexon Carpio and Ato Policarpio for chemical waste firm CFS Corporation in Valenzuela City.

TOXIC waste dumped into the river at Barangay Lambakin, Marilao, Bulacan.

EDWIN BACASMAS

The driver was identified as Lope Reyes while his helper was a certain Allan Torres.

Charges against the owner of the farm, Carlos Clemente, are also recommended for alleged failure to prevent the dumping of the chemical waste into the irrigation facility inside his property.

The irrigation facility leads to the Marilao River.

"The (PAB) thinks there is enough evidence to file the necessary charges against those involved in the commission of the prohibited act," Reyes said in his order for the filing of charges.

The chemical wastes' fumes resulted in the hospitalization of several residents, including children, and an oil spill in the river.

Reyes' order, released yesterday, also directed the CFS Corp. to show cause in five days why no cease-and-desist order should be issued and no criminal charges should be filed against it for allegedly disposing illegally its chemical wastes and for contracting out the transport and disposal of wastes.

The owner of the truck, Evelyn Sto. Tomas, was also ordered to show cause why no criminal charges should be filed against her and why her truck should not be confiscated after it was used for the alleged illegal disposal of chemical wastes.

If found guilty, the alleged violators of the Clean Water Act could be fined up to P3 million and imprisoned for up to 10 years.

HOMELESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Seventy-one year old Virginia Gabson holds on to her Sto. Niño statue after Metro Manila Development Authority aides demolished her house along with those of her neighbors in Barangay Dongalo, Parañaque City at the height of the holidays. The residents said their only wish was to stay in their homes until the end of the year.

REM ZAMORA

UP professors earn less than PMA cadets, says regent

By DJ Yap

CADETS AT THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY Academy (PMA) may not know it, but they are actually earning more than some teachers at what is considered the country's premier educational institution, the University of the Philippines system.

While a PMA cadet gets P16,338 every month, including subsistence allowance, an assistant professor I at the state-run university, with salary grade 18, has a monthly salary of P15,841.

"At standardized salary rates, the UP faculty is resigned to a life of genteel poverty," Roland Simbulan, faculty regent, said at the recent UP System-wide Academic Personnel Conference in the Diliman, Quezon City campus. "If a faculty member is an instructor or assistant professor, it means that he/she gets less than what a student earns in a call center," he added.

The UP has a faculty of 3,600 educators in all its campuses.

Simbulan said that while faculty members were proud to be teaching some of the brightest students in the country, even the prestige of teaching at the premier university was being eroded by the more pressing need to survive.

"Because of their meager salaries, most UP teachers can only afford to live in rented apartments on or outside their campuses," Simbulan said. And those who stayed on campus "dreaded" the day of their retirement, knowing they would be evicted from their subsidized housing facilities, he added.

"Professors who are too old to shift careers are forced to peddle insurance plans and real estate, *chorizo*, and even cemetery plots to augment their income," Simbulan said in his report.

The meager compensation based on the Salary Standardization Law, was a "pittance compared to what is given to professors in leading private universities," he said.

According to the 2006 report of the UP Ad Hoc committee to review tuition and other fees, a full professor at UP is paid P13,686 per teaching load unit—well below the P27,971 at De La Salle University and P18,600 at Ateneo de Manila University.

A UP associate professor receives P11,019, while his/her counterparts at La Salle and Ateneo receive P18,312 and P15,400, respectively. For UP assistant professors, the basic rate is P9,033. At La Salle and Ateneo the rates are P13,645 and P11,000, respectively. UP instructors get P7,098, while those in La Salle and Ateneo receive P9,454 and P7,600, respectively.

The low salaries have prompted many UP faculty members to look for greener pastures, even overseas.

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Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

1. The **BICOL MEDICAL CENTER**, through **General Appropriations Act** intends to apply specified sum for the **Procurement of Security Services for C/Y 2007** (IAEB No. 2006-016). The Approved Budget for the Contract is **THREE MILLION PESOS ONLY (PhP3,000,000.00) (GAA CY 2007)**.

Sale of Bid Documents	December 22, 2006 to January 10, 2007
Pre-Bid Conference	January 10, 2007 – 9:00 A.M. BMC Library
Bid Opening	January 22, 2007 – 9:00 AM. BMC Library

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

2. The **BICOL MEDICAL CENTER** now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Procurement of Security Services which will commence effective February 15, 2007 until December 31, 2007.

The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, **ITB**. The bider with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the lowest calculated and responsive bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure

4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from **BICOL MEDICAL CENTER** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon; 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.**, except weekends and Holidays.

5. A complete set of Biddidng Document for the project may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (PhP1,500.00)** The method of payment will be in the form of Cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address, date and time stated above. The bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following forms, in the amount at least equal to and not lower than a percentage of the ABC or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency:

1.	**Cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or Irrevocable letter of credit**	**(1% of ABC)**
2.	**Bank Guarantee**	**(1.5% of ABC)**
3.	**GSIS Surety Bond**	**(2.5% of ABC)**

Late bids shall not be accepted.

7. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representative/s who choose to attend at the address below.

8. The **BICOL MEDICAL CENTER** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

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Contact Person
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Chief Administrative Officer and BAC Chairman

(Sgd.) **ANGELITA A. AGAWA, MPA**
BAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 23 & 29, 2006)

Police advise motorists not to lose their cool in traffic jams

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.
and Tarra V. Quismundo

EXPECTING HEAVY TRAFFIC ESPECIALLY IN areas going to malls, markets and transport terminals with the approach of New Year's Eve, police are reminding motorists to cool it.

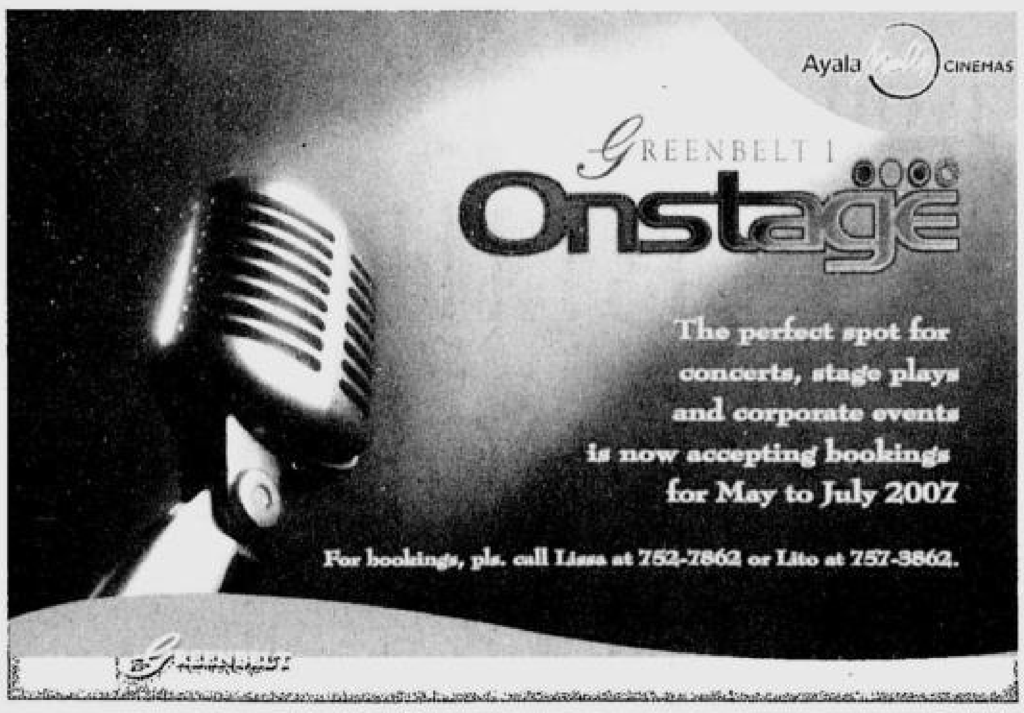
"We are reminding our motorists to be extra patient during traffic jams, or when finding parking spaces, so we can avoid untoward incidents," Eastern Police District director Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman told the INQUIRER.

He noted that confrontations that sometimes turn violent usually happen during traffic jams.

Better yet, Ticman advises car owners to just share rides if possible instead of using all their vehicles at the same time. He added that people could also use mass transport systems, like buses and trains, to lessen the volume of vehicles on the streets.

Meanwhile, major arteries in Makati City's business hub will be closed over the weekend to pave the way for New Year's Day revelry at the Central Business District (CBD), City Hall announced yesterday.

The Makati Department of Public Safety said that Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas will be closed to traffic from 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 30, until around 10 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 1, as the CBD area will host activities for the New Year's Eve countdown.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METRO-BRIEFS

Still closed

THREE of the five carnivals in Marikina City remain closed following an accident that killed a 10-year-old girl and hurt six other children three days ago. Initial inspection visits also revealed lapses in the safety requirements of some rides in the other carnivals, fire chief Antonio Razal told the INQUIRER. Four carts of a scramble ride in a small carnival in Barangay Jesus Dela Peña crashed into the ground after the metal rotator holding the carts broke apart on Monday afternoon. Razal said that from the small carnival in Dela Peña, those in barangays Sta. Elena and Sto. Nino also remain closed, pending another round of inspection.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Water at last

THE TAGUIG City government yesterday promised its residents an ample supply of potable water by next year. Mayor Freddie Tinga has requested the Manila Water Company Inc. to speed up the building of individual water pipelines to consumers in a bid to stop the proliferation of groups that have allegedly been charging consumers P30 to P35 per cubic meter of water, three times higher than what MWCI was charging consumers with individual connections.

Jocelyn R. Uy

Not safe

MANILA residents who burn tires and other flammable materials to welcome the New Year face imprisonment. Mayor Lito Atienza ordered yesterday barangay and police officials to arrest anybody who would burn tires on the streets, saying it was "a very dangerous practice. The noxious fumes caused by burning tires pose health and safety hazard to both people and environment and could cause fires and accidents," he said. The mayor urged city residents to just use whistles and horns to make noise in welcoming 2007. Atienza also directed city firemen to be on alert as fires could be triggered by firecracker blasts or burning debris on the streets.

Tina G. Santos

Russia links ex-Yukos exec to spy poisoning

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN PROSECUTORS said on Wednesday that Leonid Nevzlin, a former top manager of the Yukos business empire, could have ordered the poisoning of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko.

"A version is being looked at that those who ordered these crimes could be the same people who are on an international wanted list for serious and very serious crimes, one of whom is ... Leonid Nevzlin," Russia's prosecutor-general's office said in a statement posted on its web site www.genproc.gov.ru.

The statement adds another bizarre twist to the Litvinenko saga and could indicate Russia plans to up the pressure on the former owners of Yukos, which has been dismembered and is now bankrupt after facing billions of dollars of back tax claims.

Nevzlin's spokesperson dismissed the prosecutor-general's allegations: "Everyone knows the KGB's methods. These statements are ridiculous and do not warrant a response." A trusted business partner of jailed Russian oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Nevzlin has provoked the Kremlin's ire by slamming Putin for the destruction of YUKOS, which he says was political motivated.

After Khodorkovsky's arrest in October 2003, Nevzlin fled to Israel and later received Israeli citizenship. He has a Jewish grandparent.

Litvinenko, who died in London on Nov. 23, made a deathbed statement accusing Russian President Vladimir Putin of his murder. The Kremlin called Litvinenko's allegations "nonsense." His slow, agonizing death in a London hospital from poisoning by radioactive polonium 210 has prompted a five-nation police investigation and scorched the Kremlin's reputation, despite its repeated denials of any involvement in the murder.

The prosecutor general's office said traces of evaporated mercury had been found in cars, flats, cottages and offices in both Moscow and London. It did not say who owned or used the properties.

Significant amounts of polonium 210 were found in Litvinenko's body after his death, but it was unclear what role mercury could have played.

A single team has been created to investigate the Litvinenko and Yukos cases, the prosecutor-general said.

The head of holding company GML, Yukos's main shareholder, said the accusations against Nevzlin were an attempt by Russian officials to divert attention.

"This is a typical, predictable Russian government ploy," Tim Osborne told Reuters by telephone.

"They are trying to blame Nevzlin but everyone else believes that either the Russian government or the FSB were behind the murder of Litvinenko. This is just a conjecture to throw the heat off them," he said.

Litvinenko's friend Alexander Goldfarb called the prosecutor-general's statement "sheer nonsense." "This statement is a very clumsy effort to shift the blame for this murder and it only adds to the suspicion that the Russian government is standing behind this murder," he said.

Russia wants to try Nevzlin for a series of killings which a Russian court has said were carried out by the former head of security at Yukos.

Khodorkovsky, who is serving an 8-year sentence for fraud and tax evasion, has been moved to a detention center in Russia's Far East, possibly to face new charges, his lawyer said this month.

Yukos was declared bankrupt in August and its assets are expected to be put up for sale within a year. Analysts expect state oil firm Rosneft to be the major beneficiary of Yukos's break-up, with gas monopoly Gazprom also poised to snap up assets. *Reuters*

US mourns death of ex-president Ford

LOS ANGELES—US FLAGS flew at half mast across the country Thursday in honor of the late former US president Gerald Ford, as preparations for a state funeral were underway for the man who led America from its darkest political hour after the Watergate scandal.

Ford, who in 1974 became the 38th US president when he replaced the disgraced Richard Nixon, died quietly late Tuesday at his home in Rancho Mirage, in southern California, his family said. He was 93. No cause of death was given.

Ford's 896-day presidency is best-remembered for pardoning Nixon for his role in the Watergate scandal within weeks of taking office. The pardon provoked howls of condemnation and likely cost him the 1976 presidential election to Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Federal officials on Wednesday announced five days of memorial services in Ford's honor starting with a ceremony Friday in California.

Ford's casket will then be flown to Washington for a state funeral at the US Capitol on Saturday.

The casket will lie in state for two days for public viewing at the Capitol Rotunda ahead of a service at the National Cathedral on Tuesday.

Ford's body will then be taken to his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he will be buried at the Gerald Ford Museum.

The unassuming Republican politician was a decorated World War II veteran who saw action aboard a navy aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

He was president in April 1975 when the last US troops, diplomats and Vietnamese supporters were flown out in helicopters from the roof of the US embassy in Saigon, marking the end of the US intervention in Vietnam.

This experience may have shaped his disagreement with the US-led war in Iraq: in a Washington Post interview published Thursday, Ford made it clear he "very strongly" disagreed with President George W. Bush's justifications for invasion.

"I don't think I would have gone to war," Ford told the Post in an interview conducted in 2004, just over a year after the US-led invasion that toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The taped interview was held for publication after his death. *(See story on page A 21)*

Tributes for the late president streamed in from around the world.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard on Thursday praised Gerald Ford's "calm leadership," saying he will "be remembered as a forthright and decent man who safely guided the United States of America in troubled times." Outgoing United Nations chief Kofi Annan said Wednesday that Ford would be remembered for his "leadership, calm resolve and broad experience ... during a particularly difficult period." British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Ford would be "dearly missed," while Queen Elizabeth II was "saddened" by news of his death. French President Jacques Chirac meanwhile mourned the passing of a "great statesman." President Bush offered his condolences to Ford's widow Betty soon after he was notified of the death on Tuesday. *AFP*

FLAGS fly at half staff in memory of former US President Gerald Ford at the Washington Monument as military helicopters pass over the dome of the Capitol in Washington Dec. 27. Ford's body will lie in state for a period of public mourning in the Capitol Rotunda beginning this weekend. REUTERS

Iran told to comply with nuke watchdog

CRAWFORD, TEXAS—THE United States warned Iran Wednesday against heading into a "downward spiral" of non-cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA after Tehran's parliament authorized the government to limit the agency's access to its atomic sites.

A White House spokesperson, Scott Stanzel, urged the Islamic Republic to "immediately" conform to the demands of the UN Security Council to suspend its enrichment of uranium, a practice many fear is a cover for developing nuclear weapons.

"Iran has long been in noncompliance with its Non-Proliferation Treaty and required IAEA safeguard agreements," Stanzel said in Crawford, Texas, where President George W. Bush was spending the end of the year.

Further non-compliance by Iran "will worsen its situation in the eyes of the world" and generate further reports of non-compliance from the International Atomic Energy Agency, he said.

"It is hard to see how such a downward spiral is in the interest of the Iranian people," the spokesperson said.

"We hope, therefore, that the Iranian regime will set aside threats and confrontation and will begin immediately to cooperate with all the requirements of the Security Council." The spokesperson's comments echoed an earlier statement by the State Department.

"We assume further reductions in Iran's already insufficient cooperation would likely lead to additional IAEA reports of additional Iranian non-compliance," spokesperson Gonzalo Gallegos said. *AFP*

Islamist forces withdraw from Somali capital

MOGADISHU—A JOINT ETHIOPIAN and Somali government force controlled the main routes into Mogadishu and was poised to capture Somalia's capital after Islamist rivals fled the city, a government spokesperson said on Thursday.

A leader of the Somalia Islamic Courts Council (SICC), who seized the coastal city from US-backed warlords in June, said their top leaders had withdrawn from Mogadishu and that it had descended into chaos. The interim government's spokesperson said the Islamists had fled to the southern port city of Kismayu.

"Our forces already effectively control Mogadishu because we have taken over the two control points on the main roads outside the city," Somalia interim government spokesperson Abdirahman Dinari told Reuters. "Within two to three hours we will capture the whole city."

A top Islamist leader said the hasty withdrawal was a tactical move in a war that began last week with Ethiopian troops defending a weak interim government.

A joint force of Ethiopian armor and government fighters has pushed to within 30 km of the capital, routing Islamist defense lines before them.

A Somali envoy said the joint forces would besiege the capital rather than attack it.

The SICC had brought a semblance of stability to Mogadishu by imposing sharia law. Islamists said order in the city had collapsed with their departure.

"We have withdrawn all the leaders and members who worked in the capital," Islamist leader Sheikh Sharif Ahmed told Al Jazeera television by telephone. "Mogadishu is now in chaos."

Witnesses reported looting late on Wednesday and the sound of gunshots on Thursday in a sign that anarchy had returned to one of the world's most dangerous cities.

Resident Abdi Kadir said he was one of the looters who attacked an Islamist command center to steal small arms and rounds of ammunition.

"I went to see if I could get anything for myself," he told Reuters adding that SICC forces later dispersed the looters.

Ahmed said the Islamists remained united and determined to push out Ethiopian forces, but had retreated to avoid more bloodshed.

"We will not negotiate with Ethiopia while its forces are inside Somalia. If Ethiopia wants to negotiate it must withdraw its forces and it bears full responsibility for what is happening in Somalia and the fighting and chaos in the Somali capital," he added.

Government spokesperson Dinari said the administration now controlled 95 percent of the country.

President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi remained in the government's south-central base Baidoa and would move to Mogadishu at the earliest opportunity, he added. *Reuters*

LEWINSKY REUTERS

Lewinsky graduates from London School of Economics

NEW YORK—FORMER WHITE House intern Monica Lewinsky, whose sexual relationship with US President Bill Clinton led to his impeachment, has graduated from the London School of Economics, her publicist said on Wednesday.

Lewinsky, who was 21 when she became involved with Clinton, is interviewing for jobs in Britain, publicist Barbara Hutson said.

When Lewinsky, 32, received her Masters of Science degree in Social Psychology last Thursday "the audience of students and parents erupted in spontaneous applause ... It was a very emotional moment for her," Hutson said in a statement.

Hutson said Lewinsky spent the past year studying and "staying away from the London social scene." She completed a thesis entitled "In Search of the Impartial Juror: An exploration of the third person effect and pre-trial publicity." *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Bombs kill 23 civilians in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Three bombs killed 23 Iraqis in Baghdad on Thursday, and the US military announced the deaths of three American soldiers. Two bombs exploded shortly after 10 a.m. opposite a park in the South Gate area, killing nine civilians and wounding 43, a police officer said on condition of anonymity because of security concerns. South Gate is often crowded with commuters and shoppers. A bomb planted under a car killed 12 civilians and wounded 26 others near al-Sha'ab stadium in eastern Baghdad, police said. The bomb exploded among a group of people lining up to buy kerosene. Another blast targeted a police patrol in western Baghdad but missed, killing two civilians instead, police said. Four others were wounded and taken to Yarmouk Hospital. *AP*

Israel PM orders resumption of strikes

JERUSALEM—Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert ordered the army on Wednesday to resume strikes on Palestinian militants in Gaza after a rocket attack wounded two Israeli teenagers despite a month-long truce. After meeting with top security officials, Olmert ordered the army to resume attacks on rocket launching cells in the coastal strip in the face of continuing breaches of a truce that went into effect on Nov. 26. Just hours after the Israeli decision, Palestinians again fired a rocket towards southern Israel, but which, according to the army, fell inside Gaza. *AFP*

Mass burial for Nigeria blast victims

LAGOS—Most of 269 people known to have died in an oil pipeline blaze in Nigeria's main city received a mass burial early Wednesday while families of those reported missing toured hospitals, seeking loved ones they suspected had been charred beyond recognition. "Two hundred and thirty-eight bodies were buried overnight," Ige Oladimeji of the Lagos State Red Cross told AFP Wednesday, adding that a second mass burial would be organized for the remainder. Nigerian Red Cross Executive Secretary Abiodun Orebiyi said at least 269 people died in Tuesday's blast and fire in the north of Lagos, the commercial capital, and added that scores of others had been injured. *AFP*

Egyptian man dies of bird flu

CAIRO—A 26-year-old Egyptian man died of bird flu on Wednesday, the third member of his extended family to die of the virus, a World Health Organization (WHO) official told Reuters. Brick factory worker Rida Farid Abdel Halim from the Nile Delta province of Gharbia had been in hospital for 10 days, Hassan el-Bushra, WHO regional adviser for communicable diseases surveillance, said. The province is some 80 km north of Cairo. It was the 10th death from bird flu in Egypt since an outbreak of the virus started in February. Bushra said Egypt had no other bird flu patients receiving treatment. Eight Egyptians had contracted the disease and recovered. *Reuters*

Republic of the Philippines
Professional Regulation Commission
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Professional Regulation Commission, with address at P. Paredes cor. N. Reyes St. (formerly Morayta St.), Sampaloc, Manila, hereby invites prospective bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for:

Items to Bid for for 2007 requirements	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date/Venue of of Pre-bid Conference	Date/Venue of of Submission and Opening of Bids
PRC Employees' Health Maintenance Care for 2007	2,500,000.00	January 11, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Flr., Main Bldg.	January 24, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Flr., Main Bldg.

The Health Maintenance Card for 2007 shall form part of the health benefits provided to employees of the Professional Regulation Commission both for the Central and Regional Offices for the year 2007.

Only bidders registered with the Electronic Procurement Service for procurement of goods and services shall be allowed to participate in the bidding process. Bidders may obtain the Application for Registration for the procurement of goods and services and the Terms of Reference (TOR) at cost starting on January 5, 2007 at the Office of the BAC Chairman, Commissioner Renato B. Valdecantos, 2nd floor, PRC Main Bldg. The deadline for the submission of the application for registration shall be on January 11, 2007 at 5:00 in the afternoon.

The PRC Bids and Awards Committee shall screen the eligibility of prospective bidders based on their compliance with the eligibility requirements on a pass/fail basis, evaluate, and post-qualify bids based on a set of criteria of responsiveness to the Commission's requirements.

All particulars relative to the registration, eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids, and awards of contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA), and its Implementing Rules and Regulations as amended.

The prospective bidder's largest completed contract should be fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract or should have completed at least three similar contracts within the last three (3) years and the aggregate contract amounts should be equivalent to at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC of the project to be bid.

The Commission reserves the right to verify the veracity of any information or authenticity of any document submitted in the course of bidding and to undertake ocular inspection of offices and facilities of bidders. It likewise reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or formality therein, and to accept the offer most advantageous to the PRC. It shall not assume any responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense incurred in the preparation of the bid, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Very truly yours,
(Sgd.) LEONOR T. ROSERO
Chairperson

(PDI – December 29, 2006)

Ford disagreed with Iraq war

WASHINGTON—FORMER President Gerald Ford disagreed with the US-led war in Iraq, the Washington Post reported Thursday, citing an embargoed tape recorded interview conducted in 2004 with the late US leader.

BUSH REUTERS

FORD AFP

Ford, who died Tuesday at the age of 93, told the Post's Bob Woodward that he "very strongly" disagreed with President George W. Bush's justifications for invading Iraq.

"I don't think I would have gone to war," Ford told the Post in an interview conducted just over a year after the US-led invasion that toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Ford said that he would have more vigorously pushed for alternatives such as sanctions against the Saddam regime.

Ford was also critical of two of the Iraq war's strongest advocates: Vice President Dick Cheney—his former White House chief of staff—and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who performed the same job during his presidency.

Rumsfeld headed the Pentagon under Bush from 2001 until late 2006, when he was replaced by former CIA chief Robert Gates.

"Rumsfeld and Cheney and the president made a big mistake in justifying going into the war in Iraq. They put the emphasis on weapons of mass destruction," Ford told the Post.

"And now, I've never publicly said I thought they made a mistake, but I felt very strongly it was an error in how they should justify what they were going to do," he said.

Ford said he also understood "the theory of wanting to free people," referring to Bush's assertion that the United States has a "duty" to free people around the world.

But the former president was skeptical about "whether you can detach that from the obligation number one, of what's in our national interest." He added: "And I just don't think we should go hellfire damnation around the globe freeing people, unless it is directly related to our own national security."

Audio clips of the four-hour interview, which were carried out for a future book project and were for publication after his death, are posted on the Washington Post newspaper website.

The former president's views were expanded in lengthy conversations with the Post in 2005, according to the newspaper. *AFP*

Iraq prepares for execution

BAGHDAD—IRAQ PREPARED WEDNESDAY for the rapid execution of former dictator Saddam Hussein, with the US-backed government eager to bring his chapter in the country's bloody history to an end.

As another deadly car bomb hit Baghdad and the shooting of a Shiite politician triggered anti-American protests, the fate of the ousted tyrant threatened to deepen still further the rift between Sunnis and Shiites.

Justice Minister Hashem al-Shibli said Saddam's death sentence for crimes against humanity—upheld by an Iraqi appeal court on Tuesday—would be rubber stamped by the presidency and the prison service would hang him.

In a defiant open letter to his former subjects, the man who ruled Iraq with an iron first from 1979 until the 2003 US-led invasion said he would go to the gallows as a "sacrifice" and urged Iraqis to unite against their enemies.

"I sacrifice myself. If God wills it, He will place me among the true men and martyrs," wrote Saddam in the letter, which his lawyer said was penned last month for release if his death sentence was upheld.

Judges have ordered that Saddam die within 30 days but, while Shibli said the execution process will get underway rapidly, it could be delayed by the onset of the four-day Eid al-Adha holiday, due to start at the end of the week.

Saddam and two regime cohorts were convicted of crimes against humanity on Nov. 5, after a court heard they ordered the deaths of 148 Shiite men from the village of Dujail in an act of collective punishment.

Shiite politicians welcomed Saddam's imminent demise as a blow to his remaining supporters that could take the heat out of the Sunni-led insurgency. Shiite lawmaker Baha al-Araji from radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's bloc called for Saddam to be hanged this week as an "Eid present for Iraqis." *AFP*

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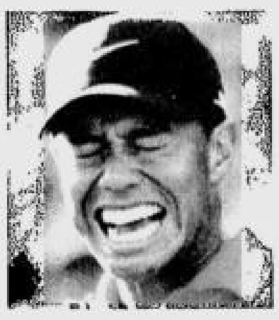

WHAT'S INSIDE

Tiger's total dominance year's top sports story /A25

SPORTS

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Title droughts end for Tigers, Lions /A26

Asian Tour resets RP Open golf

By Jong Arcano

FIRST THE ASEAN SUMMIT. NOW, THE PHILIPPINE Open.

In another last-minute postponement of a major international event seen to worsen the country's image in the eyes of foreign visitors, the Philippine Open golf championship scheduled two weeks from now at the Wack Wack east course has been reset for a later date.

Neither a super typhoon nor a terrorist plot is the issue here. It's the lack of money supposed to fund a tournament needing no less than P15 million for prizes alone and about P2 million in expenses.

"Yes, the Asian Tour had informed us that there is no money for the Philippine Open if it will be held on its original schedule," Pablo Soon, chair of the sports and games committee of Wack Wack told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Soon conferred with Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, president of the National Golf Association of the Philippines which is being paid royalty by the Asian Tour for the marketing and organizing rights to the Open, yesterday to discuss the new development relayed to them by Patrick Young of the Asian Tour.

"It's unfortunate but we have to find ways to make sure that it pushes through," Soon said.

Reports have it that both First Gentleman Jose Miguel (Mike) Arroyo and business tycoon Ricky Razon have each pledged $100,000 (about P5 million) for the Open with the rest to be covered by pledges to be obtained by the Young's team.

But the Asian Tour which was supposed to sell the event to prospective sponsors never got to convince more sponsors to come in, thus forcing the sudden postponement.

Because of this, Soon said that Wack Wack as well as the NGAP group of Mendoza will take an active role in selling the Open. They were given an option to stage it either late in February or May.

The INQUIRER tried but could not reach Mendoza for comment.

The news of the postponement came as a shock to those who joined a 36-hole qualifier for the 10 slots allotted to the NGAP for the Open topped by Carito Villaroman with rounds of 72 and 68.

"We we're surprised when Jake Ayson of the NGAP told us about it," said Marlon Dizon, who was among the 10 qualifiers.

It is also certain that most of the foreign pros have already made arrangements with local hotels and may have to cancel their reservations with the corre-

ASIAN/ A24

PHILIPPINE OPEN

DEFENDING CHAMP: Scott Strange RUDY ESPERAS

Villaroman tops qualifying

CARITO VILLAROMAN SIZZLED with a four-under-par 68 yesterday to top the two-day qualifying tournament for the Philippine Open golf championship at Wack Wack's east course.

Together with his first round score of 72, Villaroman totaled 140 and towed nine other players, including five amateurs, into the tournament proper of the country's premier golf event slated Jan. 11-14, also at Wack Wack.

VILLAROMAN: 72-68

Hanson So Jr., who showed the way with a 71 on the first day, carded a 75 to finish second at 146 while amateurs Louie Dacudao (77) and Jong Laput (76) took the next two spots at 149 and 150, respectively.

Cassius Casas, who bested an all-local field to rule the 2001 RP Open, also at Wack Wack, recovered with a 75 and made it to the event after an

VILLAROMAN/ A24

EDWIN BACASMAS

MANNY Pacquiao (right) touches fists with American promoter Bob Arum to seal their new partnership yesterday.

Assured of $5-M purse, Pacman opts for Arum

By June Navarro

ASSURED OF A $5-MILLION PURSE in his next fight, Manny Pacquiao reaffirmed his commitment to stick it out with Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions yesterday.

"The new development is that Top Rank is now my new promoter," said Pacquiao during a press conference at the Manila Hotel.

"*Matagal kong pinag-isipan ang desisyon na ito. May tiwala ako sa* (I thought about this decision for so long. I have full trust in) Top Rank."

After dumping the seven-fight contract he signed with Golden Boy Promotions last September, Pacquiao will have a guaranteed purse of $5 million when he slugs it out with WBC super featherweight titlist Marco Antonio Barrera in his first fight next year.

Aside from arranging a Pacquiao-Barrera II, Arum also assured Pacquiao of a multimillion-dollar fight in Macau next year.

"Whether he (Pacquiao) fights Barrera or another foe in Macau, Manny will make as much or more than fighting Barrera in Las Vegas," said Arum, who had flown in from the United States to seek Pacquiao's final blessing.

Arum said Top Rank would dangle a $2.5-million offer to Golden Boy Promotions, the outfit that handles the career of Barrera, for a fight in April.

"It will be a very, very good offer," said Arum. "If Golden Boy doesn't accept, Manny will fight another opponent April 28 in Macau. We have made arrangements for that fight and there's already a list of very good opponents to choose from."

Should Barrera take the bait, the projected fight in Macau will be moved to September, Arum added.

"We promise the Filipino people

ASSURED/ A24

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Long shot Sumcad paces Kukji golf with solid 64

By Musong R. Castillo

ORLAN SUMCAD, AN OBSCURE PRO from Bacolod, played a near-flawless round yesterday to set the pace in the Kukji Environment Inc. year-end tournament at the short but tricky Camp Aguinaldo course in Quezon City.

The 33-year-old Club Malarayat bet fired a four-under-par 64 on nines of 31 and 33 over the tight military layout for a one-stroke lead over another surprise entry, senior circuit veteran Juanito Pagunsan, in the chase for the P100,000 winner's prize.

Sumcad goes into the final round of the P750,000 event today ahead by three strokes over the most dangerous man in the 63-player field, former Philippine Open champion Robert Pactolerin, who scrambled for a 67.

Pactolerin, who won the Open in 1990, bogeyed Nos. 12 and 13 and salvaged his card with birdies on the final two holes, the last one coming from a brilliant blast from an awkward lie in the left greenside bunker to within six feet.

"This course, though short, is playing really tough," Pactolerin, whose other birdie came in the eighth, told the INQUIRER in Filipino.

"It's hard to post a low score, especially if you miss the green and you don't have a great short game."

Asian Tour veterans Mars Pucay and Rey Pagunsan were in a five-man group with level 68s after both stumbled in the finishing nine of the 5,100-yard course.

Pucay, who won the Omega tournament after an eight-hole playoff over Pactolerin earlier in the year, was working on a two-under card after nine holes before sputtering home like Pagunsan, the long-hitting uncle of rising Asian star Juvic.

The tournament is being bankrolled by Kukji executives Young Soo-kim, Hyun Hoo-yang and Chan Woo-yang and supported by Camp Aguinaldo GM Reynaldo Ochosa. Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines president Jun Bustamante is the tournament director.

Veteran Benjie Magada, a two-time winner in the defunct Philip Morris tour, turned in a 33-36 for a 69 like Ruben Sasutil, even as Mario Siodina carded a 70 and stood six shots behind going into the final 18 holes today.

Noted swing coach Jun Cedo and Randy Garalde tied for seventh spot after submitting 71s.

Sumcad drove the ball perfectly all day, leaving himself with easy iron shots to the small greens of the Aguinaldo layout.

SINGAPORE MASTERS

Gomez on course for GM result

FILIPINO FIDE MASTER JOHN PAUL GOMEZ STAYED ON COURSE in his bid for a Grandmaster result after salvaging a draw with GM Susanto Megaranto of Indonesia in the fifth round of the 2006 Singapore Masters chess tournament at the Asean Chess Academy in Singapore.

CHESS whiz kid Wesley So takes scalp of Russian in fifth round.

The 20-year-old Gomez now has 3.5 points, the same output of compatriot IMs Wesley So and Yves Rañola and nine others.

So bested Jasur Madijov of Russia while Rañola beat WGM Xu Yuanyuan of China.

Gomez needs to play a third GM to have a chance at a GM result, although he has to score at least 6.0 in this nine-round Swiss.

His first three wins came at the expense of GM Wang Rui (2463) of China, FM Graham Chua Xingjian of Singapore and GM Shi Long (2524) of China, respectively.

Top seed GM Zhang Pengxiang of China, fresh from winning the 1st PGMA International Chess two weeks ago, bested GM Nguyen Ngoc Trong Son to score 4.5 points and share the lead with fellow GMs Zhao Jun, Zhang Zhong and Wang Hao.

Zhao, who beat Gomez late Wednesday, halved the point with Zhang while Wang beat countryman GM Ni Hua.

With the loss, GM Ngoc Troc Son was stuck at 4.0 points and dropped into a tie for 5th to 9th places along with GM Shi Long and Zhou Weigi from China and Le Quang Liem of Vietnam.

Three Filipinos—IM Chito Garma and FMs Anthony Makinano and Julio Catalino Sadorra—have 3.0 points. IMs Ronald Dableo, Enrique Paciencia and Luis Chiong IV have 2.5 points like FM Roderick Nava and NM Eric Gloria while newest Fide certified chess instructor Dr. Alfredo Paez had 1.0 point.

In the Challenger's section, lone Filipino entry Lyndon Sombilon of Davao City had 3.5 points. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Assured of $5-M . . .

From page A23

that what we'll gonna do for Manny is something special," said the promoter. "You'll never see anything like it.

"Manny is a superstar here and among Filipinos in the US. But our goal is to make Pacquiao a worldwide superstar."

Pacquiao also indicated that his trainer Freddie Roach is staying with his team despite failing to convince him to favor Golden Boy Promotions in the promotional dispute.

Arum, who arrived in Manila on Christmas Day and caught a connecting flight to General Santos City, convinced Pacquiao to honor the four-year contract they signed after "Pacman" demolished Erik Morales last month in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao's $3-million purse in the third Morales fight was his biggest so far.

Arum said he's confident they would win the legal battle over the promotional rights to Pacquiao filed by Golden Boy Promotions.

"If we lose, we are liable but Manny Pacquiao will be indemnified. He has no risks here," said Arum, a lawyer from Harvard University.

"From our end, we're pushing that the case be adjudicated within a short period of time. They have indicated that they want to settle. They know that our merits are correct. Because if they want to string it out, it could go on for a year," he added.

The promotional tug-of-war had resulted in the World Boxing Council canceling its purse bid between Pacquiao and Barrera slated next month.

With the cancellation, Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer said that Barrera would most likely face World Boxing Organization interim featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez on March 17.

With a report from Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

Villaroman tops . . .

From page A23

opening 79. He tied Rico Depilo, who shot a 76, for fifth with 154 in the event conducted by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Benjie Sarmiento, another amateur, rallied with a 75 after an 80 to tie three others for the seventh to 10th positions at 155. Other qualifiers were Marlon Dizon, who had a 76, and amateurs Kevin Tayao and Miko Alejandro, who both advanced despite a pair of 81s.

Failing to make the grade was club pro Antolin Fernando, who finished in joint 11th with amateurs Venjo Reyes (75) and Marcel Puyat (77) with 156 after a second 78.

The $300,000 RP Open, Asia's oldest championship, will serve as the kickoff leg of the 2007 Asian Tour.

Another set of qualifiers for the pros will be held next week at Sherwood Hills in Trece Martires City.

Asian Tour resets RP Open . . .

From page A23

sponding penalties.

While most national tournaments of neighboring countries have attracted big-time sponsors and are now offering pots hitting the million-dollar mark, the Open has always been beset by funding problems. Postponements like what happened to this year is really nothing new.

Expectations were high for this year's Open since it was calendared as the opening leg of the biggest Asian Tour ever in recognition of its historical background as the oldest professional tournament in Asia.

It's purse was also raised from an original $200,000 to $300,000 based on the information provided at the Asian Tour website.

Kyi Hla Han, chair of the Asian Tour, was also said to have expressed dismay over the postponement and will seek for an explanation from Young over what happened.

Ironically, the Asian Tour also released a new story yesterday, saying everything was set for the holding of the RP Open with Angelo Que on special focus.

The announcement of the postponement from the Asian Tour is expected to be made today.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Penny Wise (7), Maria Makiling/Olive Tan (3), Miss Lilypilly (5), Dark Desert/Windlass (2)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Doña Nene (1), Words Of Joy (7), Please Don't Stop (8), Parrot Moe (4)
Race 3—(Tri)—War Alert (2), Tiger Song (4), Gold Is Gold (5)
Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kilimanjaro (3), Shipman (7), Reporter (6), Erica's Talent (9), Be My Pride (10)
Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Andorra (3), Ocean Cookie (3), Dona Gelay (8), Silver Cho Cho (5), Take Ten/Silver Place (9)
Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Firehouse (1), Earth Angel (3), Caroline Belle (6), Jajie (9), Brazen Truth (8)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Lucky Joe (10< Fast Reason (2), Don Paolo (3), Armidala (4)
Race 8—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Ger Francis (3), Queen Esther/Royal Scepter (7), Special Guest (2), June Siete (4), Don Peri Gold (9)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Dynamic Jason (2), Hurry Prince (10), Cuadro De Alas (13), Morning Nell (11), Lovable Trisha (4), Fine Offer (3)

INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Friday, December 29, 2006

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				PBA				Big News	PBA					Sentro	Real Stories		Araw-Araw Premyo Sa [illegible]	Simbang Gabi
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Bart The Vandel Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maalaala Mo Kaya			Princess Hours	Bandila	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		Alias (Season V)		Lost (Season II)		Fear Factor (Season V)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400 (Season 2)		Ultimate Guinness World Records	E Buzz	Spider-Man					Canon Mega [illegible] Viewer's Choice
bTV		TV Shopping		NBA: Sonics @ Nuggets					NBA Home Video Grant Hill NBA Sensation		B-Ballography: W. Reed	Overtime P. Ewing	FIBA World Basketball	NBA Sols: Courtside Comedy	NBA Sonics @ Nuggets				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Brutal				Mano Po 3: My Love				Blackbeard				Eseng ng Tondo				Feng Shui	
Cinemax			Rage Of Honor			Timeline				Hellboy				Waterworld				Anacondas: The Hunt For The Blood Orchid	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		The Closer		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order Special Victims Unit + 24		Dominick Dunne's Power, Privilege & Justice		Without A Trace		The Unit	
Discovery Channel	Connect	Extreme Machines		Power Zone		How Do They Do It	Mean Machines	Beyond Tomorrow		Rides		American Chopper		How Do They Do It	Mean Machines	Science Of Star Wars		Crime Stories	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/[illegible] Bunny	Shuriken School	Lilo & Stitch	Power Hour		Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Emperor's New School	America's Funniest Home Video	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Atlantic Coast Conf. Rutgers Vs North Carolina				Golf Hawaii	English Premier League Preview	Women's Pro Billiards '06		Classic Boxing: J. Dempsey-Early Years		Golf Programming	Golf Hawaii	Sportscenter Asia	Pool: Snooker Premier Snooker League 05				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Veronica Mars Season 2		Change of Heart	Eliminidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Everwood Season 2		Beach Girls		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Trading Spouses		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Kapuso Movie Festival				Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika	StarStruck: The Next Level	Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Bubble Gang		Saksi	
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Crayola: Tales Of Gulliver's Travel		McLeod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Family Law		Mesmer Murders, The Maid Splendor				Regenesis	
HBO			Shrek 2			Against The Ropes				Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events				The Fugitive				Must Love Dogs	
Hero TV	Di-Gata Defenders	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Raijin-Oh	Di-Gata Defenders	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	New Life Shopping Network		Japan Video Topics/Arms		Japan Video Topics/Arms		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/Arms	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonight	Karera Sports TV	
JackTV		Back Track				Sweat	X-Play	Heat		Mad TV		That 70s Show	Everybody Hate Chris	Family Guy	American Dad	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Primetime Glick	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Design Remix	30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	DIY Jewelry Making	Food 911	Boy Meets Grill	Martha		Clean House		Rachel Ray		Isaac		Simply Wine With Andrea Immer	The Great Adventure
MTV Philippines		MTV Music Remedy	VH1 Fabulous Life 10 Hottest Celeb		Boiling Points	My Own	MTV Hits		Rockista on MTV	Get Spotted	Homecoming	MTV Diyes		Boiling Points	My Own	MTV News	All Things Rock	VH1 Fabulous Life Celeb Swag	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Club MYX	MYX Versions	Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic	Monkey Business	Nat'l Geographic Specials		Secrets Unveiled				Top 5		Nat'l Geographic Specials		WOW!		Top Gun Week		Oasis			
NBN					Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		GSIS Member's Hour		Ting Ng Bayan		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubuyog		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Asian Anime Fest: Avatar The Legend Of Aang/ Kappa Mikey		SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Catscratch	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	Dark Oracle	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO							Coach				Balweg				Urang Tikim				Sa'yo Ang Batas, Akin Katarungan
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Ganda Ng Lola Ko		News On Q	Love Life		Irene	Extranatural
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Mundo	Popeye & Son	Chinese Movie	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	NCIS		CSI: Miami		Without A Trace		Newswatch Now	TV Greats On Friday		
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Shepherd's Voice		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports	Golf Today	World's Greatest Auto Show		FIVB Cuba vs. Brazil				Billiards: US 9 Ball		Sagupaan	AutoExtreme	Ultimate Fighter		Gameplan		Sportsdesk		Spanish League: Deportivo vs Racing	
Star Movies		Thumbsucker (3:15 PM)				Simon Birch				Because Of Winn-Dixie				Taxi			AVP: Alien Vs. Predator		
Star World	Two And A Half Men	The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	TNA Wrestling		Third Watch		Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	Walker Texas Ranger
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	Superman The Animated Series	Justice League Unlimited	Wazzup Wazzup	7th Heaven	Charmed (8:15 PM)		Ghost Whisperer (9:15 PM)		News Central	Conan (10:45PM)		MYXlog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Clare Kaagapay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15 PM)							

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Kobe, Smush spark Lakers past Magic

ORLANDO, FLORIDA—KOBE BRYANT scored 27 points and Smush Parker added a season-high 20, sending the Los Angeles Lakers over the Orlando Magic, 106-93, in the NBA on Wednesday.

Grant Hill had 20 points for Orlando and Jameer Nelson added 15 points and seven assists. Dwight Howard had 12 points and eight rebounds.

After scoring 15 points in the first half, Bryant virtually disappeared in the third quarter. He hit three free throws but missed three field-goal attempts and didn't make a second-half shot from the field until a 3-pointer 1:17 into the fourth quarter.

The Lakers didn't need him. Parker scored nine points during a 14-3 run in the third quarter, and Brian Cook nailed a 3-pointer just before the period ended to give Los Angeles a 79-73 lead.

Wizards 114, Bobcats 107

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Gilbert Arenas scored 39 points and outdueled Gerald Wallace down the stretch to help Washington earn its fourth straight victory.

Arenas had a 3-pointer, a backdoor layup and drew a charge that fouled out Raymond Felton in the final 4 minutes for the Wizards, who became the first NBA team in 12 seasons to score 106 or more points in 12 consecutive games.

Wallace scored 40 points—one shy of his career high—and added 14 rebounds and six steals.

Cavaliers 89, Hawks 76

At Atlanta, LeBron James scored 27 points and Cleveland handed Atlanta its fifth consecutive loss.

The Cavaliers snapped a four-game road skid, winning away from Cleveland for the first time since a Dec. 1 victory at Atlanta, where they have won six straight.

Atlanta's Joe Johnson, coming off a season-low 12 points Saturday in a loss to Detroit, was only 4-for-17 from the field to set a new low with 10 points. Zaza Pachulia led the Hawks with 22 points.

Rockets 96, Nets 71

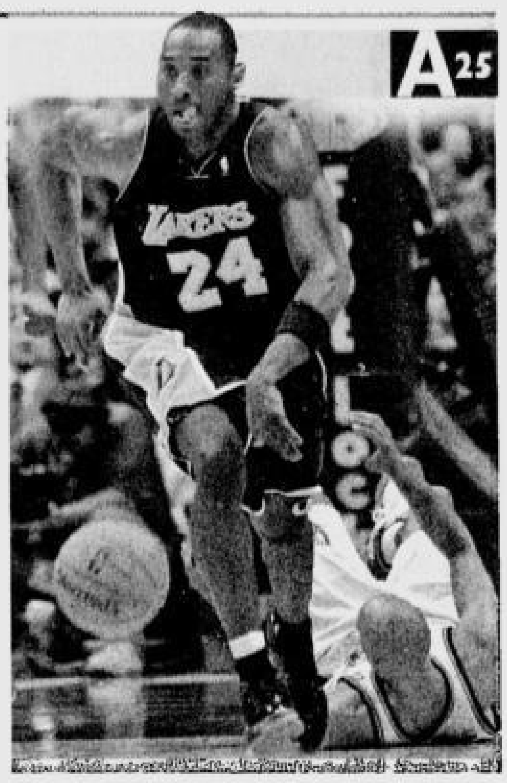
At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Shane Battier hit a career-high seven 3-pointers and scored 23 points to help Houston get the win.

Tracy McGrady added 17 points and six assists for the Rockets.

Juwan Howard had 12 points and 11 rebounds for the Rockets, who outrebounded the Nets, 54-32, despite being without All-Star center Yao Ming, who will be sidelined for six weeks with a fractured bone beneath his right knee.

The Nets big three of Vince Carter (12), Jason Kidd (11) and Richard Jefferson (11) combined for 34 points on 11-for-40 shooting from the field. The 25-point margin of defeat was the Nets' worst this season.

In other NBA games, the Toronto Raptors nipped the Minnesota Timberwolves, 100-97; Milwaukee Bucks blasted the Memphis Grizzlies, 112-96; the New York Knicks outlasted the Detroit Pistons, 151-145; and the Chicago Bulls downed the Miami Heat, 109-103. *AP*



BRYANT pushes the ball upcourt. AP

'3 blind mice' jibe nets Kidd hefty fine

NOT KIDDING: Jason (left) confers with a ref

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—New Jersey Nets star Jason Kidd was fined $20,000 by the National Basketball Association on Wednesday for referring to officials Jim Clark, Tom Washington and Eric Lewis as "three blind mice."

Kidd ranted about the officiating following a 92-91 loss to the Detroit Pistons on Tuesday. NBA executive vice president Stu Jackson handed down the fine.

Nets coach Lawrence Frank was not fined despite walking on the court and yelling at Washington for not calling a foul when Vince Carter was bumped by Rasheed Wallace before missing a potential game-winning 15-foot shot.

"We come to work, and we work extremely hard at this, only for the officials to screw us," Kidd said. "We fought, but that doesn't mean anything when you have the officials take over the game like that. You go with the three blind mice, and it's just sad that Tom screwed up that game for us."

The no-call came just seconds after Clark called a foul on Carter on a drive to the basket by Chauncey Billups with 7.2 seconds to go. It was somewhat of a touch foul, and not nearly as hard as the bump by Wallace on Carter seconds later.

Kidd, who makes $18.08 million (euro13.7 million) this season, did not plan to appeal the fine. But he didn't back off his comments, either.

"That's how I felt," the All-Star point guard said on Wednesday. "That's how our team felt. It was the truth. There is no reason to talk about yesterday. We have to worry about today."

Frank refused to say whether he was surprised the league didn't fine him, too.

"I have paid my fair share of fines," Frank said. "It's not about the money, whether you are fined or not. This league isn't about money as much as people talk about money. It's about achievement. It hurts when something like that happens, and we lost the game." *AP*

Wild Oats on course for 2nd Sydney-Hobart victory

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIAN MAXI WILD OATS WAS on course for a rare second successive victory in the Sydney-Hobart yacht race as it neared the finishing line on Thursday. The 30-meter yacht has led for most of the 628-nautical mile race since it started in Sydney Harbour on Tuesday and was sailing strongly in southeasterly winds of up to 20 knots with less than 60 miles to go. Skandia, another Australian maxi which won in 2003, was about 20 miles behind, its crew hoping that Wild Oats would be becalmed in the notoriously fickle Derwent River leading to Hobart. Skandia was still sailing well despite losing its canard, or forward rudder, on Wednesday. The smaller, 70-foot Ichi Ban was just behind and pressing Skandia for second. *Reuters*

Tiger's total dominance year's top sports story

By the Associated Press

IT WAS, EVEN BY TIGER WOODS' STANdards, an exceptional year: Eight US PGA Tour victories, including six in a row from the British Open to the beginning of October.

What made that finish most remarkable, though, was the loss that preceded it. For anyone who's watched Woods dismantle opponents and golf courses alike and come away wondering if he was indeed human, the May death of his beloved father Earl was a heartbreaking reminder he is.

Woods' ability to channel his grief into an extraordinary run of six straight US PGA Tour wins, including the British Open and the US PGA Championship, was chosen as the sports story of the year in voting by members of The Associated Press.

"The hardest thing for me to do was play golf," Woods said recently. "Usually people go to work to get away from a loss like that."

This was the third time Woods has earned such honors. He was the story of the year in 2000, when he won three of the four majors, and in 1997, after he won his first Masters title.

Woods received 422 points in the voting. Vince Young leading University of Texas to the US college football title with a thrilling fourth-quarter rally over defending champion University of Southern California was second with 380 points, followed by the doping stories involving Barry Bonds (342 points) and Tour de France winner Floyd Landis (303 points).

The rest of the top 10 were: Barbaro winning the Kentucky Derby, then shattering his leg during the Preakness; the Pittsburgh Steelers winning their first Super Bowl title since 1980; the Duke University lacrosse scandal; Italy's World Cup victory and Zinedine Zidane's head butt; the Detroit Tigers' remarkable turnaround; and Andre Agassi retiring after the US Open.

It was a rewarding year all around for golfers. Woods also was voted AP male athlete of the year while Lorena Ochoa picked up female athlete of the year honors. It's the first time since 1945 that golfers have swept the athlete awards, and the first one-sport sweep since Sheryl Swoopes and Michael Jordan in 1993.

Earl Woods was grooming his son to be a golfer before the boy could even walk and, had he handled things differently, their story could have been that of any other prodigy driven too far, too fast. But Earl Woods' tough lessons were accompanied by even more love, and he never pushed further than his son wanted to go. Instead of bitterness and resentment, Tiger Woods had only love, respect and admiration for his "Pops."

"Dad introduced me to the game of golf," Woods said. "He taught me a lot of life lessons on the golf course. So when I came back and started working on my fundamentals, who do you think I learned my fundamentals from? I learned them from my dad."

The elder Woods' death on May 3 wasn't a surprise. A habitual smoker who had heart bypass surgery in 1986, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1998 and was treated with radiation. The cancer returned in 2004 and spread throughout his body.

He was so ill last Christmas that Tiger Woods went several days without sleeping, trying to cram in as much time as he could with his father. That Earl Woods was father, mentor, coach, sounding board and buddy made his death all the more wrenching.

"My dad was my best friend and greatest role model," Woods said when his father died, "and I will miss him deeply."

Though Woods won his first two starts of the year, he wasn't at his best with his father always on his mind. As the father grew sicker, it showed in the son's game. He tied for 20th at Bay Hill, where he'd won four times, then tied for 29th at The Players Championship.

He went on to the Masters, but it was the first time Earl Woods didn't accompany him to Augusta National. Woods also believed it would be the last time his father would see him play in a major.

"That's something I still continue to think about, even to this day," Woods said. "It was my last round that my dad ever watched me play. Knowing that going into it, if I could have given him one last shot, some positive memories before he goes, it would have been huge."

But it wasn't meant to be. Without his trademark steely focus, he made one bad putt after another on Sunday afternoon. He three-putted twice in the final eight holes, and missed two other eagle putts. He finished three shots behind Phil Mickelson.

"It was the only time I saw him try too hard," caddie Steve Williams said.

Woods took the next nine weeks off, first to be with, then to bury his father. He ended the longest break of his career at the US Open, but it was quickly evident he still wasn't himself.

For the first time in 10 years as a professional, he missed a cut at a major, shooting 76-76. It was only the fourth time he'd missed the cut at any tournament.

His next outing was the Western Open, one of his favorite tournaments at a course perfectly suited for his game. But an opening-round 72 left him flirting with the cut line again.

He trudged down to the practice range as he always does. And somewhere during those three hours of hitting balls, the grief lifted and Woods reclaimed the gift his father had given him so long ago.

He shot a 67 the next day, the first of 17 straight rounds under par. He wound up second at the Western, then won his next six starts.

There are hundreds of players—good ones, too—who don't win six tournaments in an entire career, let alone one season. To go 6-for-6, well, only Byron Nelson and Ben Hogan know what that's like.

TIGER Woods lets out a mighty roar after clinching the US PGA crown.

Yanks sign pitcher Igawa for $20M

IGAWA: Prized catch

NEW YORK—THE NEW YORK YANKEES signed lefthander Kei Igawa to a five-year contract worth a reported $20 million on Wednesday, as Major League Baseball teams continued to court Japanese pitchers.

Just two weeks after the Boston Red Sox signed pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka to a six-year $52 million deal, the Yankees announced on their website the signing of their own hard-throwing Japanese import.

While the Yankees' posting bid of $26 million to the Hanshin Tigers for the rights to negotiate with Igawa was dwarfed by the eye-popping $51 million the Red Sox paid to talk to Matsuzaka, both pitchers bring impeccable credentials to their teams.

Igawa is the Japan Central League's strikeout king.

Last season, the 27-year-old lefthander became the fifth fastest pitcher in Japanese baseball history to record 1,000 career strikeouts, reaching the mark in 1,058 innings pitched.

Armed with a 90-mph fastball, Igawa posted a record of 14-9 last season, topping the Central League in strikeouts for the third time with 194. He was named league MVP in 2003. *Reuters*

PGA pays tribute to Ford

LOS ANGELES—THE PGA TOUR HAS PAID a glowing tribute to former US President and golfing enthusiast Gerald Ford, who died on Tuesday aged 93.

Ford had a lifelong love affair with the game and regularly attended the Tour's Bob Hope Classic in California.

"President Ford made tremendous contributions to the game of golf," PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said on Wednesday.

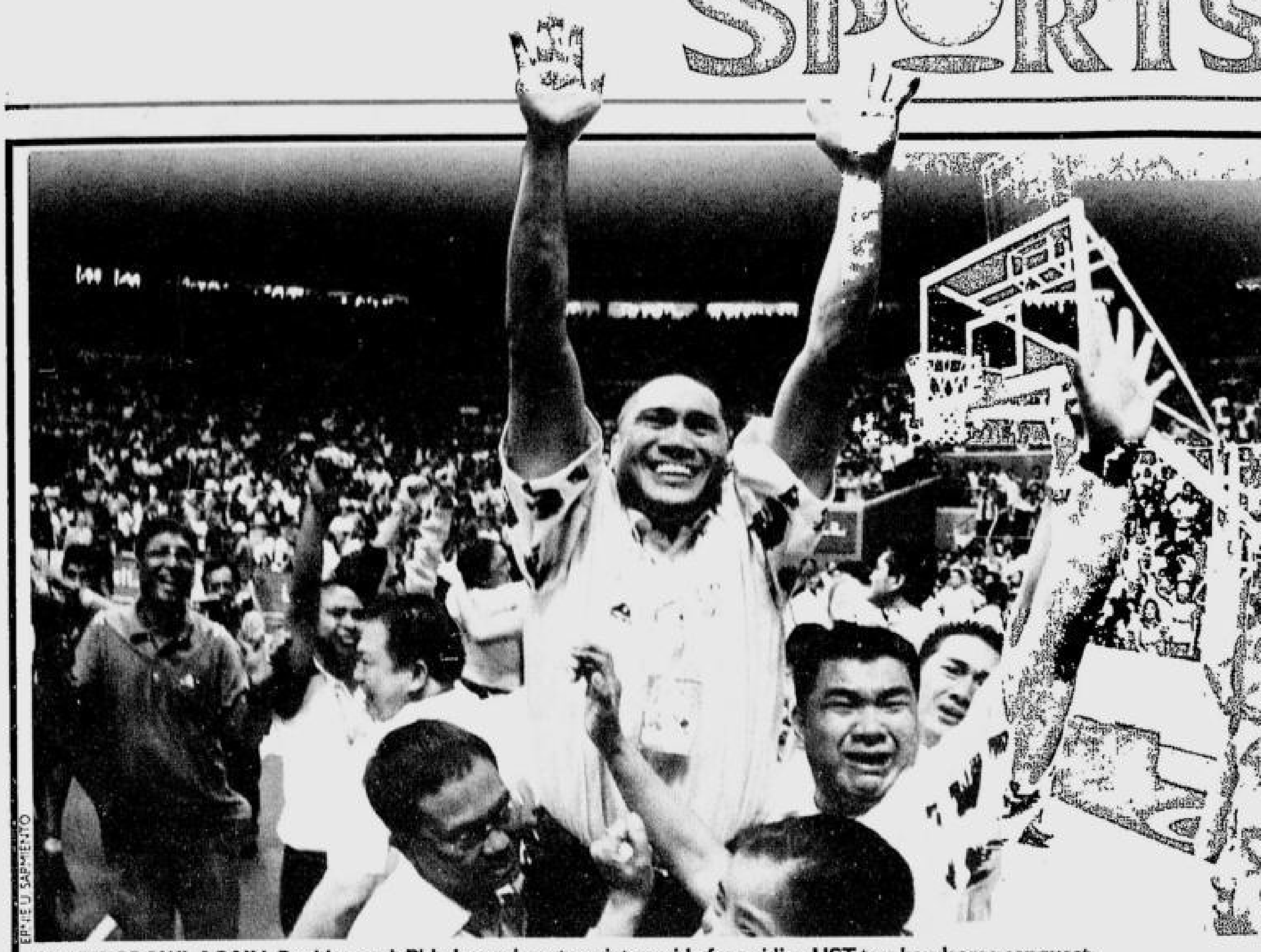
Ford was honorary chair at the inaugural Presidents Cup in 1994 when the US beat the Internationals, 20-12.

He generated headlines with some of his less successful golfing exploits. On several occasions, he struck spectators with errant tee shots, among them a 71-year-old woman who needed 10 stitches for a cut on her nose.

Good friend Bob Hope made Ford the butt of some of his jokes.

"He's easy to spot on the golf course," Hope said. "He drives the golf cart with the red cross painted on top."

Along similar lines, Hope added: "It's not hard to find Jerry Ford on a golf course. You just follow the wounded." *Reuters*



ERNIE U SARMIENTO

TIGERS GROWL AGAIN: Rookie coach Pido Jarencio gets a victory ride for guiding UST to a handsome conquest.

RYAN LIM

TOWER OF POWER: San Beda's Nigerian mainstay Samuel Ekwe.

COLLEGE CAGING

Title droughts end for Tigers, Lions

By Jasmine W. Payo

LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE, A DELIRIOUS celebration erupted when the University of Santo Tomas Tigers bagged the 69th UAAP championship crown on Oct. 2 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Only UST diehards dared expect the winning moment. With an untested crew and a rookie coach, no one took the Tigers seriously.

But new coach Pido Jarencio kept the Tigers steady throughout a year filled with adversity.

"We have the three Ps—pride, puso and palaban (pride, heart and a fighting team)," Jarencio kept on saying no matter the snickers he received from unbelievers.

Before the season started, a young UST cager hoping to rejoin the team passed away. Six-foot guard John Lee Apil, a rookie last year, died of electrocution after saving two children in a swimming pool accident in Solana, Cagayan.

Heartaches continued

The heartaches continued early in the tournament as the Tigers absorbed blowout losses and suffered from a rash of illnesses and injuries to key players.

Jarencio's never-say-die spirit, however, clearly rubbed off on his struggling, young wards.

From their near-bottom ranking, the Tigers climbed to third place with a 6-6 win-loss record at the end of the elimination round.

In the Final Four, the Tigers toppled the second-seeded University of the East Warriors to become the fifth squad in league history to overcome the twice-to-beat advantage.

Epic finals series

Pulling out one more miracle, the gritty Tigers stunned the heavily favored Ateneo Blue Eagles in an epic best-of-three finals series that went the full distance.

Finals Most Valuable Player Jojo Duncil made the unexpected title run possible by stepping up in Game 3 to lead the Tigers to a classic 76-74 overtime victory against the Eagles.

The Tigers also drew huge performances from rookie sensation Jervy Cruz, Allan Evangelista, Anthony Espiritu, Jun Cortez and Dylan Ababou.

"It's no longer about talent or skills, it's about desire, heart and pride," said Jarencio after the Tigers ended their 10-year title drought. "The boys worked hard because they want this."

An even longer title drought ended in the NCAA as the San Beda Red Lions finally lorded it over in the league's 82nd season.

Twelve straight wins

Boosted by 6-foot-8 Nigerian Samuel Ekwe, the Lions cruised through most games and strung up 12 straight wins in the elimination round.

The Lions' Finals stint, however, turned out to be a different story.

Displaying extraordinary grit, the tough-fighting Philippine Christian University Dolphins overcame a 20-point deficit in Game 3 of the Finals series.

The Lions, though, managed to hang on for a 68-67 triumph that ended San Beda's 28-year title chase.

With the collegiate fever still up, two other teams made their mark in the post-season.

Regaining their focus, the UE Warriors clinched the Collegiate Champions League crown to rule over the top 16 varsity teams in the country.

The La Salle Green Archers, who served a one-year suspension in the UAAP for fielding two ineligible players, found some cause to celebrate by winning the FilOil-Flying V Homegrown Invitational Cup.

Orcollo leaving for Derby City Classic tilt

MONEY KING: On the prowl in US.

DENNIS ORCOLLO, THE WINNINGEST Filipino player in the US pool circuit last year, is scheduled to leave soon to compete in the 2007 Derby City Classic set Jan. 5-17 at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

The 27-year-old veteran cue artist from Teacher's Village in Quezon City will see action in the Derby City One Pocket Division, Derby City Bank Division, Derby City 9-ball Division, Derby City Ring Game and Derby City Master of the Table.

"I need to practice hard," said Orcollo, who won the six-man invitational 2006 World Pool League crown in Warsaw, Poland, in Filipino.

Orcollo goes into the tournament fresh from ruling an exclusive star-studded six-man field and bagging the P180,000 winner-take-all purse recently.

The special "money game play" tournament featured Efren (Bata) Reyes, Francisco (Django) Bustamante, Ronnie Alcano, Alex Pagulayan and Lee Van Corteza.

The knockout phase saw Orcollo edging Bustamante, Pagulayan trouncing Alcano and Corteza beating Reyes. By luck of the draw, Orcollo won the first title slot, leaving Corteza and Pagulayan to dispute the other berth. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

MILO JUNIOR CUP

Japanese forge duels with Filipino teeners

JAPANESE BET IORA UEHARA EDGED Leander Lazaro, 7-6, 6-1, and compatriot Jun Onishi routed Ralph Sobrevega, 6-0, 6-2, yesterday to barge into the semifinals of the boys' 14-under division of the Milo Junior Tennis Cup at the Philam Homes Tennis Club in Quezon City.

Uehara arranged a semifinal showdown with the top seeded Filipino Jose Lorenzo Ferrer, who whipped Malaysia's Oscar Chang, 6-4, 6-0.

Onishi set up a clash with No. 2 Kyle Cordero, who ousted Alvee Villamor 6-3, 6-1.

Shohei Osaki demolished Marlo Espedido, 6-1, 6-1, in the boys' 18-under bracket to continue the rampage of the Japanese netters, who represent the Hyogo Tennis Club, in the yearender Milo tournament organized by CTW, supported by Prince tennis equipment and sanctioned by the Philippine Tennis Association.

Osaki forged a clash with fancied local hope Mark Balce while Osaki's teammate Hiroki Tsunematsu, who downed Raymond Padigos 6-3, 6-2, tangles with James Canete, a 6-3, 6-3 victor past Duma Boloto.

In the unisex 10-under, Mark Escares, Brysl Libao, Claudio Canlas, Jeremiah La Torre, Kyle Parpan, Vince Salas, Vince Mark Tabotabo of Cebu and Agustine Change, representing Sarawak State, all gained quarterfinal seats after posting contrasting wins over separate rivals.

SPORTSWATCH

Pasay 5-cocker today

THE LB CANDELARIA 5-COCK DERBY, Pasay City Cockpit's yearend special, takes center stage today with more than 80 fights scheduled. Sagupaan Complexor 3000 will sponsor the event. Big-time cockers from groups like GCAP, PCCA and NCA will see action, as well as invited breeders from Cavite, Batangas, Quezon and Laguna. Hosts Ambet Asenas and Ducar Dimayuga has put up a cash prize of P500,000.

22 lead Makati derby

AFTER SIX GRUELING ROUNDS, 22 PARticipants have scored three wins each in the 257-entry "Pamaskong Salpukan" 6-cock derby at Makati Coliseum. Those who posted three wins each Monday and Wednesday were Raymond Velayo (Arnis Master), Noriaki Morita (JGBA Morita), Manny Rio (BMR), E. Austria (San Vicente Frasco), Edmund Yasay Wild Harvester), Raymond Turla (Mapaniqui March 17), Richmond Lim (Fastest Win Dec. 30 Sta. Ana), Richard Bates and Colonel Katigbak (Swerteng Magkasama) and MC Chicken Special entry. The championship round blasts off tomorrow. Participants with 1.0, 1.5, 2, 2.5 and 3.0 points will clash for the title tomorrow.

150 entries at Roligon

NO LESS THAN 150 SMALL-TIME COCKers and breeders are vying in the "Noche Buena" 4-cock derby which offers P1.2 million in guaranteed prizes on Jan. 2, 4 and 6 at Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque. The bulk of participants will come from the United Backyard Breeders Association (UBBA). Hosts Ronnie Lacsina and Dr. Boy Tuazon, who will be assisted by Jerry Ang and Ben4 Nadurata, pegged the entry fee at P7,700 and minimum bet at P3,300 to attract more participants. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 0918 -9001411.

Yonex-Sunrise Badminton Tour listing starts for Cebu regional

REGISTRATION IS IN FULL SWING FOR THE Cebu Regional Championship of the Yonex-Sunrise Badminton Tour slated Jan. 26 to 28 at the Portside Badminton Center in Cebu City.

National coach Errol Chan, also chair of the Tour's organizing committee, said that leveling of participants in five classes for boys' and girls' doubles, singles and mixed doubles, as well as in the Open category will be held on Jan. 6-7 and 11-12.

Chan said that players who joined the previous leg are allowed to participate in the Cebu stage and even in succeeding circuit.

Aside from Cebu, other provinces which already committed to host the tour were General Santos City (Feb. 23-25), Iloilo City, Bacolod City, Davao City, Butuan and Manila.

NCA World Championship blasts off on Jan. 9 at PCC

THE 2007 NCA WORLD CHAMPIonship 8-Cock Derby unfolds on Jan. 9, 11 and 13 at the Pasay City Cockpit with a guaranteed prize of P3.5 million at stake.

NCA president Ito Ynares recently formalized an agreement with the PCC management to hold the prestigious bi-annual cockfest to be joined in by cockers from the United States, Mexico, Japan, Malaysia and Guam.

"This is the first time that an international derby will be staged at Pasay Cockpit, that's why the PCC management is providing all-out support for this event," said pit manager Eric dela Rosa.

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- **Gov't nontax revenues** hit P97B as of Nov. /B3

BUSINESS

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RP paying in full $220-M debt to IMF

Move to allow early exit from monitoring program

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL ng Pilipinas yesterday said the country will pay in full its $220-million debt to the International Monetary Fund before the end of this year.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco said the retirement of the debt ahead of maturity would allow the country to exit early from its post-program monitoring arrangement with the IMF, which was scheduled to end in April.

The advance payment of the IMF debt was approved yesterday by the Monetary Board.

"The prepayment will serve as a watershed event in the Philippines' relationship with the IMF, since it will end the country's use of IMF resources after nearly four and a half decades," Tetangco said.

"This is a confidence-boosting move that will usher in a new level of relationship with the fund," he said.

The country has been considered a "prolonged user" of IMF resources, with 23 programs with the Bretton Woods institution consisting mainly of standby arrangements.

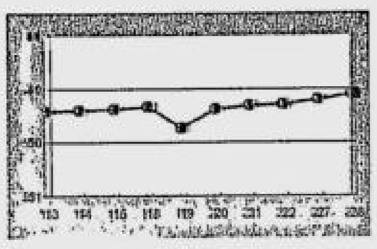
No financial assistance was extended to the Philippines under this arrangement, which has been in place since 2000, but the economy remained under close watch by the IMF.

The PPM provides for more frequent consultations between the IMF and members whose funding arrangements have expired but which continue to have outstanding credit with it. These consultations focused mainly on policies that have bearing on external viability.

RP PAYING IN/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

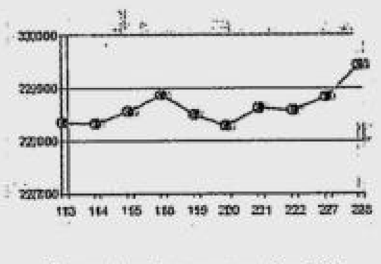
₱ 49.10 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 28, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

DECEMBER



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks, peso continue to climb

By Doris C. Dumlao
and Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PESO YESTERDAY SURGED TO A HIGH of 49.10:$1, gaining 9.5 centavos from Wednesday's finish of 49.195 to the dollar.

This was attributed to strong dollar inflows from foreign investors gobbling up local stocks and the record-high remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

Yesterday's P49.10:$1 finish was the highest close since March 22, 2001.

Also, share prices jumped 2.08 percent yesterday for the best finish in nine years and eight months as investors bet on continued strong gains going into 2007, dealers said.

They said Wall Street's record performance overnight provided a strong lead, with most blue chips led by Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT) posting strong gains.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 59.91 points to close at the day's high of 2,943.38, off a low of 2,883.47. It was the best finish since April 18, 1997, before the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis, when the market closed at 2,944.98. The broader all-share index rose 30.67 points to 1,843.67.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco said the continued strengthening of the peso was a reflection of a high investor confidence in the country's macroeconomic fundamentals, resulting in robust portfolio investments.

"The Philippine economy continued to grow in 2006 on the strength of solid economic fundamentals. Economic growth was achieved in an environment of decelerating inflation with a November year-on-year rate of 4.7 percent," Tetangco said.

"The economy drew strength from the favorable performance of the country's external sector traced to robust remittances and the double-digit export growth. The country's positive external position allowed the buildup of a healthy level of international reserves, which reached a high of $22.6 billion in November and contributed to the strengthening of the peso," he added.

Estelito Biacora, assistant vice president at Bank of the Philippine Islands, said the strong foreign exchange inflows would likely allow the peso to test the 49:$1 barrier very soon.

"It's due to positive investor sentiment, with the stock market reaching new highs," Biacora said.

In the meantime, Oliver Plan of Asiasec Eq-

STOCKS, PESO/ B2

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buying
a condo,
ask yourself ...
Other condos give you nothing but an empty shell.
"is what you
SEE really what
you're going
to GET?"
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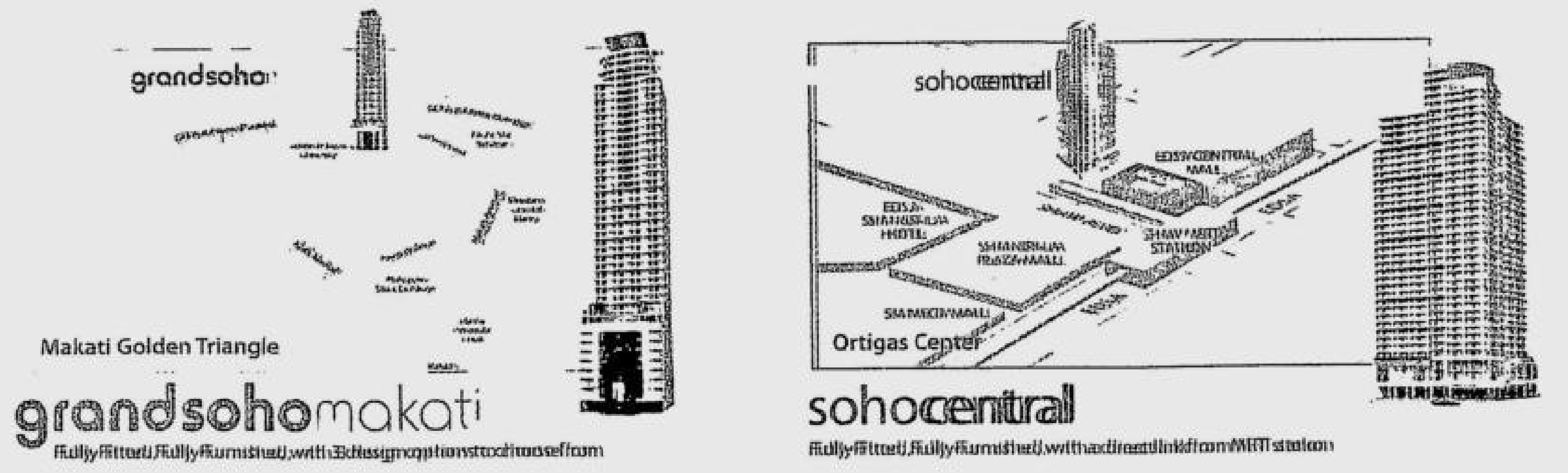

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Transfer of MWSI stake stalled

Maynilad creditors fail to submit consent, setting back west concession water deal

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE TRANSFER OF THE METROPOLITAN Waterworks and Sewerage System's 84-percent equity in Maynilad Water Services Inc. has been stalled by the lack of a written consent from French shareholder Suez Environment and two bank creditors, government officials said.

As of Wednesday, Suez Environment, formerly Ondeo Services Inc., as well as creditors Deutsche Bank and Avenue Asia Company, have not given their consent to the deal that would have closed the sale of the west water concession to winning bidders DMCI Holdings and Metro Pacific Corp., according to Office of the Government Counsel justice Agnes Devanadera.

"The transfer and signing of the transaction documents that should have sealed the deal between the MWSS (and the winning consortium) have not transpired due to this technicality," Devanadera said.

Already, MWSS has assured DMCI and Metro Pacific that the setback is only temporary, she said.

Devanadera and financial adviser ABN-AMRO are now trying to sort out the problem and have moved the final closing date to Jan. 5.

Devanadera revealed that one of the lenders is seeking the immediate payment of the debt acquired by the former owner of Maynilad.

She declined to identify the creditor.

Devanadera explained to the creditor that the payment up front would not be possible.

She said the formal signing of the transaction documents would have to be done first before the DMCI-Metro Pacific consortium could put up the $504 million in payment for the MWSS' stock in Maynilad and other dues.

The OGCC chief justice also noted that under the terms of the bidding, the creditors are allowed to air their concerns during the prequalification stage.

She added that French shareholder Suez Environment, as represented by Jacques Letondot, was present during the bidding proceedings.

"Suez has not formally given its consent, but their presence during the proceedings is a deemed compliance to the requirements," Devanadera said.

According to Metro Pacific Investments president and CEO Jose Ma. K. Lim, their consortium with DMCI is confident that the government-led MWSS and OGCC will resolve the issue in time.

As the winning bidder, the DMCI MPIC Water Company will take over and continue operations of the west zone for the remaining years of the 25-year concession.

The winning bidder will also have to assume Maynilad's obligations under a "debt and capital restructuring agreement" with the MWSS.

Cebu Pacific ends 2006 with P99 fare

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE COUNTRY'S LEADING BUDGET airline has launched a year-end seat sale for all of its domestic routes, costing only P99 one-way.

Cebu Pacific will offer discounts for more than 100,000 seats for all of its 20 domestic destinations and 24 domestic routes.

The seat sale will run from Dec. 28, 2006 to Jan. 3, 2007. It will be good for travel from Feb. 1 to Mar. 31.

The P99 seat sale is non-refundable and will have to be paid upon booking. Promo fares do not cover regular surcharges and government tax.

The best way to grab the promo is through CEB's website, cebupacificair.com.

"Cebu Pacific had a massive 2006, where we have grown to become the leading domestic airline in terms of having the most domestic destinations, the most domestic routes, the most domestic flights, as well as offering the lowest year round fares on the youngest fleet of aircraft in the Philippines," said Candice Iyog, CEB marketing director. "As such, we just want to say thank you to all of our guests by giving them a chance to continue traveling in 2007."

Now in its 11th year, CEB has the newest set of aircraft in the Philippines, with a fleet age of less than 11 months. It also has one of the newest aircraft in Asia, operating 12 brand new Airbus planes carrying passengers to 20 domestic and seven regional destinations, including Jakarta, starting on Jan. 31, 2007.

The airline awaits the delivery of two more Airbus aircraft in 2007, which will complete its $670 million re-fleeting program.

Stocks, peso continue to climb

From page B1

uities Inc. said: "For the past three to four months, the attraction of the stock market to foreign investors is quite strong. We think this is because we are headed toward a good first quarter."

Westlink Global Equities' Rommel Macapagal said people expecting better times ahead were taking positions now.

Eagle Equities Inc. president Joseph Roxas said the market's 60-point jump could also be attributed to window dressing. *With a report from AFP*

PRULINK PRU LIFE UK

Investments of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week Dec. 26, 2006	Last Week Dec. 19, 2006
Bond Fund - Peso	1.61351	1.61012
Managed Fund - Peso	1.81484	1.81137
Growth Fund - Peso	1.57730	1.56577
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.3652	1.3591

* Note: These investments of variable life insurance contracts are not mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission

INSULAR LIFE

Wealth Builder and Wealth Secure

Investment Funds of Wealth Builder & Wealth Secure

UNIT PRICES (In Php)

	Dec. 25, 2006	Dec. 18, 2006
Fixed Income Fund	1.257499	1.254906
Balanced Fund	1.325641	1.318397
Equity Fund	1.458216	1.443065

These investment funds are specific to variable life insurance contracts and are not considered mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission.

The weekly unit prices are also available at www.insularlife.com.ph.

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Southern Leyte
CITY OF MAASIN
Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The City Government of Maasin through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites all interested suppliers, dealers, distributors and contractors to apply for eligibility and to submit bids for the supply and delivery of one hundred ten (110) sets of Pentium 4 Personal Computers and accessories with an Approved Budget of the Contract of four million nine hundred fifty thousand pesos, Philippine currency (PhP 4,950,000.00).
2. The Bids and Awards Committee will hold a Pre-bid Conference on Thursday, January 4, 2006 at ten o'clock in the morning at the City Conference Room, City Hall, Maasin City.
3. Interested bidders may obtain a complete set of bidding documents from January 4 to 17, 2006 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of 0.1% of the Approved Budget of the Contract to the City Treasury Services, Maasin City.
4. Deadline for the submission of applications for eligibility to bid and bid proposals shall be on Tuesday, January 18, 2006 at ten o'clock in the morning at the City Conference Room, City Hall, Maasin City. Immediately after the deadline, applications for eligibility and bid proposals will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives.
5. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use the non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted. All particulars relative to the Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.
6. The City Government of Maasin assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate and indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bid. The Bids and Awards Committee of the City of Maasin reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying and most advantageous to the government.
7. For more information, please contact the BAC Secretariat at telephone numbers 570-8608 or 381-4059.

(Sgd.) CRISPIN M. ARONG, JR.
Chairman

(PDI – December 29, 2006)

RCBC to acquire 66.6% of credit card company

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

RIZAL COMMERCIAL BANKING Corp. (RCBC) will own 66.6 percent of credit card firm Bankard Inc.'s expanded capital once it converts into shares the P1 billion in notes payable which Bankard owes.

RCBC at present does not directly hold shares in Bankard. But the bank indirectly holds a 73-percent stake in the credit card firm through its investment banking arm RCBC Capital.

In a disclosure yesterday, Bankard said it had secured the approval of its board and shareholders to convert the notes payable. With the deal, Bankard hopes to restore its financial health which it will need to be able to explore new businesses.

As part of the plan, RCBC Capital will also convert into Bankard shares about P190.474 million in advances it made to the credit card firm.

The proposed transaction will require the approval of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. The target conversion date is set on or before Jan. 31, 2007.

The proposed transactions have been approved by stockholders representing at least two-thirds of the outstanding capital of Bankard. It was approved under the understanding that the preemptive right of stockholders would not extend to the shares to be issued to RCBC and RCBC Capital Corp., the credit card firm said in its disclosure.

To accommodate the proposed capital infusion, Bankard plans to hike its authorized capital to P2 billion from P600 million.

Bankard shareholders also approved the sale of most, or all, of Bankard's assets minus certain liabilities to RCBC, or to other interested parties if the RCBC sale does not push through.

In 2005, Bankard reported a net loss of P422.4 million, an improvement compared with 2004's P577 million net loss.

Delinquency rates declined to 12.9 percent in 2005, from 15.2 percent in 2004.

Bankard told stockholders that the company will address major challenges, this year including continuing business losses, huge unbooked provisioning for its nonperforming loans, and high liabilities.

Aboitiz delivers first of 2 Superferry ships

ABOITIZ TRANSPORT SYSTEM Corporation on Thursday said that it has delivered the vessel SuperFerry 18 to Pacific Asia Shipping Co. Ltd., a company registered in the Marshall Islands.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Aboitiz said the delivery forms part of a memorandum of agreement it entered into for the sale of two vessels, SuperFerry 17 and SuperFerry 18.

The total sale price was $39 million.

The other vessel, SuperFerry 17, will be delivered in the first quarter of 2007.

Aboitiz will use the proceeds of the sale to liquidate up to 60 percent of its interest bearing debts, which will, in turn, allow the company to save P200 million from interest payments.

In another deal with a company also based in the Pacific, Aboitiz has brought back SuperFerry 19, the vessel it chartered out to Peninsula Shipping Lines (PNG) Ltd. through a bareboat charter arrangement in October.

Aboitiz is also evaluating the need to further expand its freight business, and other alternatives, to better serve its customers and to maintain its status as the leading shipping company in the Philippines.

The company is also expecting its other vessel, Our Lady of Medjugorje, to resume its service once it completes drydock operations.

Riza T. Olchondra

DISCLOSURES

EDUARDO L. Gaspar has tendered his resignation as independent director of **Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp.**

***

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. has disclosed the disposal of 200 shares by company first vice president Ramon Alger P. Obias for P2,370 per share on Dec. 27.

***

THE BOARD of directors of **Equitable PCI Bank** has approved the appointment of Banco de Oro officer-in-charge of EPCIB, following the resignation of Rene J. Buenaventura effective Dec. 31. ***Compiled by Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 28, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	14,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	46.5	47	46	46.5	857,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62.5	63	62.5	62.5	825,900
China Banking Corp.	685	700	685	690	6,370
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	510,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	84.5	84.5	83	83	15,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51.5	51.5	51	51.5	1,061,800
Philippine National Bank	43.5	44	43.5	44	8,000
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	25	25	24	24	284,900
Security Bank Corporation	66	66	65.5	66	78,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	49	49	49	49	202,500
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	100,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	156,000
First Abacus Financial	0.67	0.75	0.67	0.74	440,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	30	30.5	30	30.5	2,200
Manulife Financial Corp.	1640	1680	1640	1680	200
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	277.5	277.5	277.5	277.5	500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2040	2040	2040	2040	260
Ivantage Corporation	1.64	1.68	1.64	1.66	4,166,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.8	74,590,000
First Gen Corp.	55.5	56	55.5	55.5	468,800
First Phil Hldgs Corp	63.5	63.5	63	63.5	432,900
Manila Electric Co. A	54	54.5	54	54.5	194,400
Manila Electric Co. B	54.5	55.5	54.5	55.5	913,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.5	2,285,000
Petron Corporation	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.1	4,448,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	400,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.12	1.14	1.12	1.14	371,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	136,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20	20.25	20	20	68,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41.5	42.5	41.5	42	747,300
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	92,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	66.5	66.5	66	66.5	43,100
San Miguel Corp. B	74	75	74	75	160,500
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.14	2.14	2.06	2.1	829,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	19.25	18.5	19.25	1,892,600
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.96	1.02	0.96	1	11,020,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	1,460,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.6	7.8	7.6	7.8	833,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.5	245,000
Republic Cement Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	10,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.4	3,671,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.71	0.72	0.7	0.71	4,550,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.19	0.205	0.19	0.2	9,770,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	40,000,000
Ayala Corp	580	585	580	580	222,330
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	150,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.9	7	6.9	7	1,204,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	15,000,000
A. Soriano Corp	2.9	2.9	2.85	2.9	58,000
Apc Group Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	3,060,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	1,700,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	950,000
Atn Holdings Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.52	1.52	200,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	74,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.3	9.7	9.3	9.7	719,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.2	2.22	2.2	2.2	981,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	1,736,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	944,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.23	0.28	0.23	0.24	3,000,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.9	1.92	1.9	1.9	399,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc	10.75	10.75	10.25	10.25	291,300
Medco Holdings	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	300,000
Magnum Holdings Inc	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.85	22,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.52	1.58	462,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	53,000
Sinophil Corp	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	500,000
Sm Investments Corp.	315	330	315	330	328,710
South China Resources Inc	0.92	0.97	0.92	0.97	122,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	9,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.27	0.3	0.27	0.3	8,190,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.13	160,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.25	15.5	15	15.5	3,986,800
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	50,000
Belle Corp	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.14	1,471,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.56	1.64	1.56	1.58	9,370,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	2,570,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	133,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	112,000
Cyber Bay Corp	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	230,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.54	14,530,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	2,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2	2.1	2	2.1	23,696,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.6	2.75	2.6	2.75	29,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	2,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	30,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.45	720,000
City & Land Developers	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	5,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.63	490,000
Megaworld Corp	2.3	2.34	2.28	2.34	35,349,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5	5	4.9	4.9	310,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.35	2,600,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	30,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.5	16	15.5	15.75	3,850,600
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.66	0.67	0.65	0.65	6,640,000
SM Development Corp.	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.65	3,225,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.25	11.25	11	11.25	11,747,800
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	2,070,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	20	20.25	20	20.25	19,700
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	11,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.94	1.94	1.9	1.94	4,997,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1235	1240	1235	1240	30,150
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.7	3,329,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2380	2450	2380	2450	138,560
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	7,150,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	3,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.06	2.16	2.06	2.16	225,000
Ipvg Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.85	3.85	689,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	4,400,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.98	2	1.7	1.8	677,000
Philweb Corp	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	34,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	18,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	190,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	20	20.25	20	20.25	190,400
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2	2	1.94	2	1,611,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	20,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	22,000
Far Eastern University	810	810	810	810	20
Ipeople, Inc	3	3.05	3	3.05	34,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp	2.06	2.12	2.06	2.12	323,000
Paxys Inc.	19.5	20	19.5	19.75	1,683,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	4	4	4	4	9,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6.1	6	6	1,340,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc B	6	6.3	6	6.2	624,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	80,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min. & Dev't	9.8	10	9.7	9.9	2,518,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	5,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.9	2.95	2.9	2.9	348,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	10,030,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	1,530,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	1,156,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.027	733,100,000
Omico Corp	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	134,900,000
Philex Mining Corp	4.1	4.1	4.05	4.05	6,413,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	166,700
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.72	0.76	0.72	0.73	790,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.38	1.46	1.34	1.46	5,921,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	640,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	5,100,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	25,400,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1	1.02	1	1.02	960,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	610,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.9	587,000

CURRENCIES

December 28, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.761789	1.000000	49.2120
Japan	Yen	0.006413	0.008419	0.4143
United Kingdom	Pound	1.490744	1.956900	96.3030
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097992	0.128634	6.3303
Switzerland	Franc	0.621412	0.815727	40.1436
Canada	Dollar	0.655867	0.860956	42.3694
Singapore	Dollar	0.495730	0.650745	32.0245
Australia	Dollar	0.597013	0.783699	38.5674
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.020767	2.652661	130.5428
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203144	0.266667	13.1232
Brunei	Dollar	0.494123	0.648635	31.9206
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000111	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.021297	0.027956	1.3758
UAE	Dirham	0.207425	0.272287	13.3998
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.312700	64.6006
Korea	Won	0.000819	0.001075	0.0529
China	Yuan**	0.097397	0.127853	6.2919
Argentina	Peso	0.247535	0.324939	15.9909
Brazil	Real	0.354783	0.465723	22.9192
Denmark	Kroner	0.134101	0.176035	8.6630
India	Rupee	0.017262	0.022660	1.1151
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.215804	0.283286	13.9411
Mexico	New Peso	0.069944	0.091815	4.5184
New Zealand	Dollar	0.535077	0.702395	34.5663
Norway	Kroner	0.121215	0.159119	7.8306
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012502	0.016412	0.8077
South Africa	Rand	0.108184	0.142013	6.9887
Sweden	Kroner	0.110499	0.145052	7.1383
Syria	Pound	0.014675	0.019264	0.9480
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023302	0.030589	1.5053
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000355	0.000466	0.0229

Source: REUTERS' FOREX CLOSING PRICES as of NY Time- 27-Dec-2006
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian Time Closing Rate as of 27-Dec-06

Gov't nontax revenues hit ₱97.07B as of November

'06 target of ₱94B surpassed; BTr brings in ₱59B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT GENerated P97.07 billion in nontax revenues as of November, surpassing its full-year target of P94 billion.

Nontax revenues include proceeds from the privatization of state-owned assets, income by the Bureau of the Treasury from various portfolio investments and grants from foreign governments and institutions.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that the BTr contributed the biggest share of the nontax revenues at P59.07 billion.

BTr income includes interest on bank deposits, proceeds of its investments in foreign-denominated securities, and the national government's dividends earned by its shares of stock in state-owned firms.

Privatization contributed P1.218 billion to the government's total nontax revenue collection.

Big-ticket state-owned assets that were sold this year included the former International School property in Makati City, Manila Gas property in Paco Manila, and property in Nampeidai district in Japan.

The government expected to generate only P500 million this year from privatization, but the successful sale of properties that had long been in the line up for privatization provided the government with a windfall.

The government decided to intensify its privatization program to help boost its revenues and rein in the budget deficit.

The government said it would opt to sell state-owned assets that are deemed better run by the private sector.

The government sold the former International School property to Century Properties Inc. for P1.432 billion after six years of enticing buyers.

The government sold the Manila Gas property in Manila to Robinsons Land for P574 million.

Other properties targeted to be privatized soon are television stations RPN 9 and IBC 13, Philippine Postal Corp. and Al-Amanah Islamic Bank, among others. The government has recently inked a deal with DMCI-Metro Pacific consortium for the sale of the government's shares in water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc.

HOLIDAY BANKING SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 24, 2006 (SUNDAY)
Open up to 3:00 p.m.:
All SM Mall & SM Dept. Store Branches
Bonifacio Global City
V-Mall
Tutuban
NAIA

DECEMBER 26, 2006 (TUESDAY)
Open up to 4:00 p.m.:
Alabang
Baclaran
Baguio-Legarda
Batangas P. Burgos
Bonifacio Global City
Caloocan
Carmen Planas
CDO-Cogon
Cebu-Elizabeth Mall
Commonwealth
Dagupan
Davao-Rizal
EDSA Cubao
Head Office
Imus Nueño Ave.
Legaspi City
Lipa
Marcos Highway
Marcos Highway-Sta. Lucia
Marikina
Naga
Rizal Avenue
Rockwell
San Pedro
Sto. Domingo
Tabora
Tarlac
V-Mall
Open up to 5:00 p.m.:
All SM Mall & SM Dept. Store Branches
Open up to 6:00 p.m.: NAIA

DECEMBER 30, 2006 (SATURDAY)
Open up to 1:30 p.m.:
Alabang
CDO Cogon
Batangas P. Burgos
Cabanatuan
Carmen Planas
Commonwealth
Dagupan
Davao Monteverde
Echague
EDSA Cubao
Iligan
Imus Nueño Ave.
La Union
Legaspi City
Lipa
Marcos Highway
Marikina
Naga-General Luna
Rizal Avenue
San Pedro
Sto. Cristo-Commercio
Tacloban
Tarlac
Open up to 4:00 p.m.:
All SM Mall & SM Dept. Store Branches
Bonifacio Global City
Baclaran
Cebu-Elizabeth Mall
Head Office
Marcos Highway-Sta. Lucia
Rockwell
Tutuban
V-Mall
Open up to 6:00 p.m.: NAIA

DECEMBER 31, 2006 (SUNDAY)
Open up to 3:00 p.m.:
All SM Mall & SM Dept. Store Branches
Bonifacio Global City
NAIA
V-Mall

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BANCO DE ORO

Gov't, Philnico move to save Nonoc deal

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE GOVERNMENT and Philnico Industrial Corp. are engaged in a last ditch negotiations with Chinese investors to save the floundering Nonoc nickel mines rehabilitation project. In a statement, Philnico president Evaristo Narvaez Jr. said the government had been trying to mediate between Philnico and representatives of Jinchuan Nonferrous Metals Corp. to iron out the kinks in the prospective deal.

"Philnico is optimistic that the government's mediation efforts with Jinchuan will eventually result in a viable arrangement for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the mothballed Nonoc nickel mine and refinery," he said.

Narvaez said Philnico was just clarifying the stance of Jinchuan with respect to its plan to do a new feasibility study on the project before resuming talks for a joint venture.

"While a new feasibility study will further delay the Nonoc project, we are confident of the sincerity of the Chinese investors and their seriousness in pursuing a deal," he added.

Narvaez said Philnico also welcomed the national government's support to fast track and conclude negotiations at the soonest possible time so that all stakeholders in the Nonoc nickel project would be able to take advantage of current record prices for nickel.

He added that Philnico, Jinchuan and the government were striving to arrive at terms that are equitable to all parties—a win-win deal that will enable all stakeholders to realize maximum value for their respective investments.

Located on Nonoc Island off Surigao City, the nickel mines is touted to hold one of the largest nickel and cobalt deposits in Southeast Asia. The mines were in operation from 1972 to 1986, when weak commodity prices and rising production costs forced it to close down.

The prospective Chinese investment in Nonoc has been the subject of no less than three agreements signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo and Chinese Premier Wen Jaibao since 2004.

Negotiations hit a roadblock earlier this month after Philnico and Jinchuan failed to agree on the exact percentage each party would own in the rehabilitated firm.

GOINGS-ON

CDO's advocacy project

CDO-FOODSPHERE INC. LAUNCHED RECENTLY its corporate social responsibility project involving a feeding program for undernourished kids.

To finance the program, CDO has committed to donate P5 from the proceeds of each CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham sold to corporate clients this Christmas season. The product costs P395 per box.

"It's the season of joy and gift-giving. We should not forget to share our blessings with the less fortunate children who are dying of hunger and malnutrition," said Akel Galangan, CDO regional sales manager.

The donation goes to Gabay Buhay project, a feeding program administered by Odyssey Foundation Inc.

Quality network forum

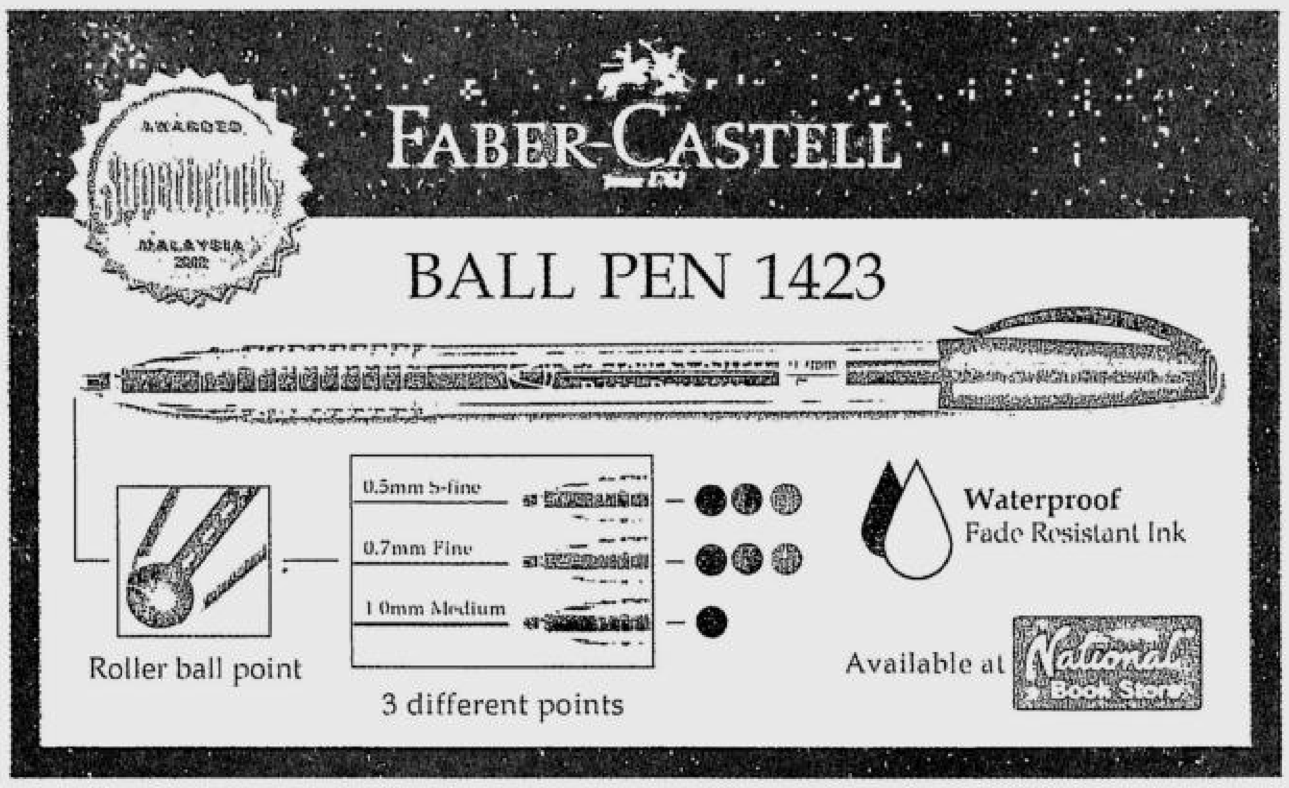
SGS Philippines Inc., the local affiliate of the Geneva-based SGS Group, recently held its 9th Quality Network Forum at the AIM Conference Center in Makati City.

The annual event provides a venue to share best practices in quality management among SGS certified clients in the food, automotive, electronics and electrical, and services sectors as well as in the manufacturing industry. This year's highlights included the "Quality Best Practice (Six Sigma)" presentation by Rolando Vicente, total quality management AVP of Integrated Microelectronics.

Jardine unit has new name

Jardine Properties Inc., the development arm of Jardine Land Inc., was renamed Northpine Properties Inc.

Hong Kong-based Jardine Matheson said the move was in line with the consolidation of its property investments, which included JPI and JLI under Hongkong Land, the main property unit of the Jardine Group.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RP paying in full $220-M debt to IMF

From page B1

Under the monitoring scheme, the IMF can offer advice but it can no longer impose policy conditions, such as those involving monetary aggregates and public sector borrowings, as done in previous programs.

"With the BSP's gross international reserve (GIR) level at a record high, the prepayment of the IMF debt is expected to send a clear signal to the international community that the structural reform process and macroeconomic prudence in the Philippines have firmly taken root to allow reduced engagement with the fund," Tetangco said.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from the IMF and foreign investments—is an indicator of a country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy like importation and debt servicing.

He said the prepayment would also lead to lower interest payments on the IMF loan.

"With the ongoing fiscal and other key reforms already starting to bear fruit, an early exit from the PPM sends a stronger, more positive signal to financial markets that Philippine authorities can independently craft and pursue a credible policy framework and reform program that will extend the trajectory of the country's economic growth and contribute to more durable external viability," Tetangco said.

He assured that the prepayment and early exit from the PPM would not alter the country's good relationship with the IMF.

"The established close policy dialogue with the Fund will continue under the Article IV (membership) framework, which other countries go through on a regular basis," Tetangco said.

This prepayment will bring to $1.4 billion the total debts paid in advance by the BSP to various creditors this year.

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Debit cards: Alternative to queueing at ATMs

Banks urge customers to swipe their cards at stores instead of withdrawing cash

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS usually the time when demand for cash peaks each year, resulting in long queues at the ATM.

Consumers in line run the risk of cash running out especially during three to four day holidays. Unknown to most consumers, however, there is a much more convenient yet underutilized alternative: The debit card.

To date, about 84 percent of consumption expenditure in the Philippines is still paid in cash, while checks and card-based transactions—whether debit or credit—account for the remaining tiny fraction.

For consumers who would like to avoid debt-driven spending sprees or have no credit cards to begin with, banks are pushing for the use of debit cards as an easier way to access cash for shopping needs especially during the holiday rush.

The debit card is a card that can be used to access a bank account through point-of-sale (POS), Internet and ATM channels using electronic payment gateways like Visa or Mastercard. It can be the ATM card itself or a reloadable cash card. The account is automatically debited when purchasing goods or services, in the same way as when the cards are used to withdraw cash.

Cash to debit

The migration from cash to debit has become a phenomenon in more advanced markets and Chinatrust Commercial Bank bets this is a technology that will soon catch up fast in the Philippines.

"The Philippines is very slow in the acquisition (of technology) but very quick in the application. Remember that the ATMs were first introduced in 1980s and by 1989 some people were still doubting on whether to use it. The same with the Internet, but now many people are using it," says Anthony Robles, Chinatrust executive vice president and head of retail banking.

Chinatrust's ATMs carry universal debit card acceptance via the Visa network. It can be used in any POS terminal and ATM machine that accept Visa, whether here or abroad. The bank also offers reloadable cash cards that can be purchased by account holders for family, friends and employees.

Local ATM networks like BancNet, ExpressNet and Megalink have their own POS terminals in selected establishments.

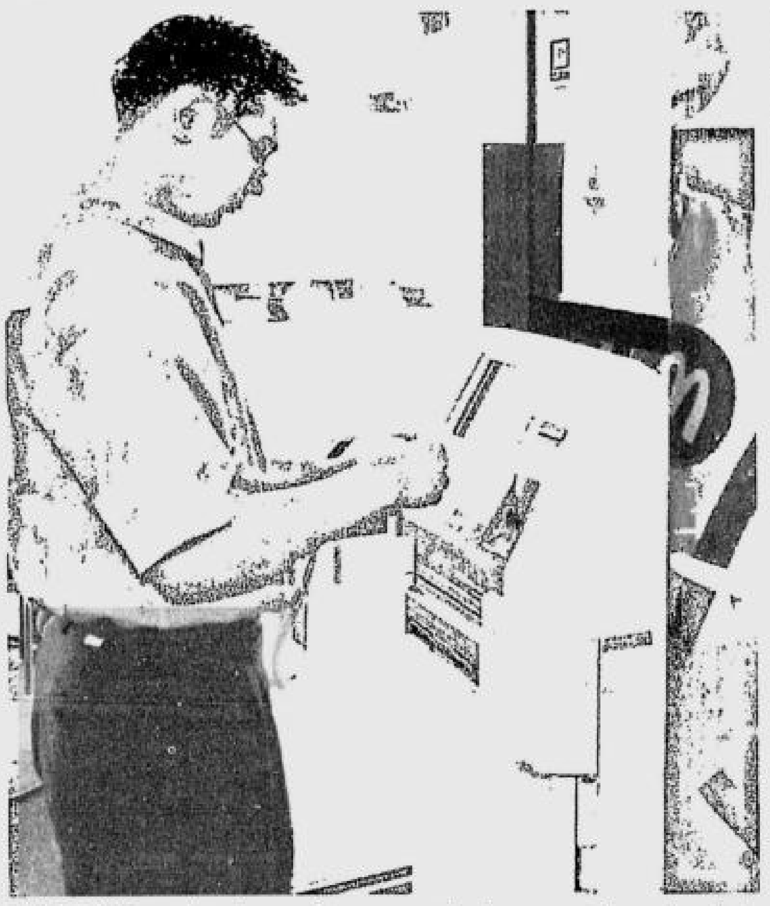
BancNet, for instance, recently advised its cardholders to use their ATM cards when shopping instead of withdrawing cash during these Christmas holidays. ATM cards of BancNet member banks can be used to pay for purchases at 1,196 shops and merchants nationwide such as the SM Group of stores, Rustan's, Robinson's, National Bookstore, Shopwise, Waltermart and Gaisano.

"Without carrying big amounts of cash with them, they will not have to worry about pickpockets which proliferate during the holiday rush," says Aristeo Zafra, Jr., executive vice president and chief operating officer of BancNet.

No difference

"The nice thing about it is under the new DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) rules, there's no more difference between cash and card transactions," Robles adds.

Before, there was a premium when one used the plastic versus over one who paid in cash. What was unfortunate was that the POS terminals didn't distinguish between debit cards and credit cards since both were card-based so sometimes, merchants would slap a surcharge even when a consumer was using debit card and not a credit card. As such, some consumers were discouraged from using debit cards.



THE DEBIT card can be used to access a bank account through point-of-sale (POS), Internet and ATM channels using electronic payment gateways like Visa or Mastercard

Picking the habit

With the new DTI ruling against credit card surcharges, users of debit cards are expected to benefit.

Robles says migration from cash to debit is a matter of mindset. He enumerates major reasons why Filipinos should pick up this habit.

1. The first and foremost reason is convenience for the consumer. There isn't any long waiting line. For Chinatrust debit cards, the bank sends a regular statement of account to allow the consumers to keep track of their purchases. By next year, Chinatrust's own debit cards will have the capability of an interactive text, allowing accountholders to do a real-time, SMS-based inquiry of their outstanding balance.

2. It's a more efficient payment scheme for banks and even the merchants. Quoting a pilot study recently made by Visa in the Philippines on major establishments, it was established that it's a lot cheaper for the merchant to accept card payments than cash.

"Between cash and cards, sometimes the merchants prefer cash without realizing that when you accept cash as payment, you have handling, accounting, sorting, deposit costs and there's risk involved," Robles says.

"So they did a time- and- motion study, to measure how much the merchants will lose when accepting card and how much they will gain because of the savings from the elimination of cash handling. They saw and they were convinced that it's a lot cheaper to accept cards," he explains.

As such, Robles says big retailers like Automatic Centre and SM raised no qualms when the DTI came out with the circular against surcharges on card-based transactions.

"They are equipped with the numbers and they understand the entire process. Now you can go to Automatic and buy washing machine and whether you pay in card or cash you get the same treatment," he says.

"That's a good development and we're moving towards the same trend in Singapore and European countries," he adds.

3. In this country where consumption is driven by dollar inflows from overseas Filipino workers, the debit card is also seen an efficient channel to capture remittance flows. And it's also true for "reverse remittance"—such as foreign expats in the Philippines who have to remit money to their families abroad or for Filipinos based in the country but financing offshore expenses such as their children's studies abroad.

"For instance, we have a lot of Indian expats here. With their earnings here they still buy dollars from the gray market and then send to their relatives in India," Robles says.

"So instead, we encourage them to open a dollar (deposit) account here and give an extension card to their spouses or children in India," he says.

4. The prepaid cash cards can be a tool which can be used by employers for payroll accounts, especially for companies like those in construction whose workers are not permanently employed.

"Can you imagine if you paid them by stuffing the envelopes? It will be a logistical nightmare. It also carriers vulnerability and security risks. But with the cash cards, it's much more convenient and the recipient can use it at the POS, supermarkets or (withdraw from) ATMs,"

Robles says.

Pension funds

Pension funds like the Government Service Insurance System (through Union Bank of the Philippines) and the Social Security System are likewise using debit cards to disburse retirement benefits and pensions.

The SSS, for its part, recently tied up with Chinatrust in providing an alternative means of remitting benefits through the new SSS Visa Card.

Through the card, retirees no longer need to open a bank account to receive their monthly pension. Chinatrust hopes to convert over 25,000 pensioners who currently receive their monthly benefit via check issuance, which still requires them to still go to the bank to encash their check. There are an estimated 150,000 retirees every year applying for pension.

5. The debit card is an alternative to the credit card for people who don't have credit cards. When checking in a hotel abroad, for instance, a guest is usually required to swipe his or her card before getting a room. Across the globe, debit cards have made traveller's checks obsolete.

6. Card transactions such as debit cards can help ease the problem in coin circulation since it will allow the payment of the exact amount of purchase. It will eliminate the hassle of scrimping for loose coins as change.

7. Finally, issuers offer a lot of perks just to encourage their clients to use debit cards, the same way as they offer rewards, rebates and mileage programs for the use of credit cards.

SEC: No filing fees for additional corporate contributions

TAX-FILES

By John Peter Ferdinand S. Echiverri and Jose A. Osana
SGV & Co.

GOOD NEWS FOR TROUBLED COMPANIES. The Securities and Exchange Commission recently resolved that it is no longer mandatory for companies to file an application for approval with the SEC if it wants to create Additional Paid-In Capital or "APIC." This means that companies will not have to pay additional filing fees that used to be required to be paid to the SEC for such filings.

APIC is a term used to refer to the additional contribution by the stockholders of a corporation in the form of donated surplus without the corporation issuing additional shares. The creation of APIC is usually resorted to by distressed companies undergoing corporate rehabilitation and restructuring. Requiring additional funds for its operations, a corporation may, for instance, ask its stockholders to increase their total investment in the business in the form of cash or property.

Debt to equity

Another instance is where the corporation is allowed by its stockholders to convert the debts owed to the said stockholders into additional equity.

In this case, APIC created to reduce or wipe out the corporation's deficits.

Through SEC Resolution No. 27, series of 2006, the SEC resolved the deletion of the filing fees imposed on the creation of Additional Paid-In Capital or "APIC" from its Schedule of Charges and Fees.

It stated that the reason for the imposition of the filing fee no longer exists and that the commission's policies are dynamic, evolving and relevant to the capital market developments. Hence, it is no longer accepting any applications for the creation of APIC.

Distressed companies

The move to delete the filing fees stems from the clamor of distressed corporations who complained that they should not be charged with this additional burden. In the said resolution, the SEC recognized that it should assist distressed corporations as an implementation of the state policy to establish a socially conscious free market that regulates itself.

However, the resolution does not only apply to distressed companies but to any company which wishes to increase its Paid-In Capital.

Prior to the said resolution, companies have to seek approval from the SEC before they can proceed with the conversion of their debts into equity resulting in the increase of their APIC.

This involves the submission of numerous documents which takes time and effort on the part of the distressed company.

No more approval

Now, no approval is needed. All that a company has to do is record the debt to equity conversion and the resulting increase in its APIC directly into their Financial Statements which will then be submitted to the SEC as part of its reportorial requirements.

The SEC recognized that the creation of APIC is an internal matter which the government need not get involved in. In fact, the creation of APIC, wherein no shares of stock are issued, has been ruled as exempted by the Bureau of Internal Revenue from income and donor's taxes.

Not close doors

Be that as it may, the SEC said that it will not close its doors to companies who want to get a formal approval for the increase of their APIC.

The SEC clarified that although it is not mandatory, it is also not prohibited.

So companies may voluntary file their applications for the creation of APIC with the SEC merely for confirmation instead of a direct application for approval. These applications will be received at the Company Registration and Monitoring Department or CRMD at the second floor of the SEC Building.

This recent SEC directive should be a welcome development to distressed companies, as the SEC has finally given in to the clamor from the private sector to do away with the process of filing an application and paying "filing fees" for debt to equity conversions resulting in APIC.

What otherwise would have been paid for "filing fees" may now be put to more productive use and the road to recovery of distressed companies would definitely be an easier one.

Cheap SEA property lures Japanese retirees

BANGKOK—SOUTHEAST ASIAN developers are targeting Japanese retirees, hoping the lure of cheap homes and health care will create a profitable new niche market.

Although Australia's Gold Coast and Hawaii have been favored destinations for Japanese in the past, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia are now promoting competing "long stay" programmes, offering foreign retirees visas and tax breaks.

Home builders are hoping today's trickle—just one in 3,000 Japanese pensioners live abroad—becomes a steady flow because over-50s hold 75 percent of Japan's individual wealth.

In the Philippines—which wants to attract nearly a million foreign retirees by 2015, creating 4 million related jobs—Robinson Land Corp plans to build houses for Japanese who are more used to cramped apartments.

'Palace in RP'

"A government is selling the Philippines as a retirement destination, so we're looking at building leisure retirement villas," Robinson Land President Frederick Go said at a recent conference in Hong Kong. "For $100,000 you can really own a palace in the Philippines."

As well as health care, developers are laying on special activities. For example, the Philslife Orchid Hills Club, near Manila, runs a website in Japanese (www.philslife.jp), promoting pastimes including organic food cultivation, cattle rearing, ballroom dancing, stargazing and cockfighting.

In Thailand, developers LPN Development PCL, Charn Issara PCL and Quality Houses PCL are building in a thriving "little Tokyo" in central Bangkok, an area popular with the 30,000 Japanese expatriates living in Thailand.

Some staff of Japanese firms, such as car makers Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co., which have made Thailand a production hub, want to bring over retired relatives.

A Bangkok apartment is typically a third the price of the equivalent in Tokyo.

"Affordable"

"It's affordable," said Rei Yamamoto, 30, who works for a Japanese software firm in Bangkok. "I decided to buy because my mother wants to spend her vacations here in the future."

The average pension in Japan is about $1,500 a month for men and $690 for women. But in an effort to head off a crisis, Japan passed a law in 2000 to cut private-sector pension payments and raise the age at which people can receive pensions to 65 from 60.

Retired banker Kou Oikawa, 62, said elderly Japanese had a comfortable life in Thailand because of its cheap hospitals.

Thai hospitals Bangkok Dusit Medical Services and Bumrungrad Hospital are competing for "health tourism" business with the likes of Singapore's The Raffles Medical Group and Malaysia's KPJ Healthcare Sdn Bhd.

The average cost to an insurer for a hip replacement operation in Thailand and Singapore is $12,000, according to medical tourism firm Planet Hospital. In Japan, costs for the procedure can mount to $17,000.

"I feel Thais are good friends to Japanese," Oikawa said.

Oikawa knows a baby boom after World War Two, followed by a drop in the birth rate, means millions will join him in retirement over the next decade.

Some estimates show Japan will have one person over 65 to every two of working age by 2025, a higher dependency ratio than any other major industrialized nation. Now pensioners make up nearly a quarter of the 127 million population.

Scams

But high-profile scams could put many retirees off.

In December, six elderly Japanese filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo district court against a firm saying it reneged on promises to provide land for homes on the Philippine island of Cebu.

The plaintiffs, some in their 70s, said they had paid up to 9 million yen ($76,210).

But instead of dream homes with one-on-one health care, they found empty, rubbish strewn plots, according to Japanese media reports. When one tried to build a house, he found the consultancy firm had no land titles.

One 73-year-old retiree was quoted by Kyodo news agency saying he wanted to "sound the alarm that there are some shady deals involving the retirement business".

But Southeast Asian governments hope their incentives will be enough to win over foreign retirees. Malaysia has been at the forefront of the region's efforts, launching in 1996 a "silver hair" scheme, now called the "Malaysia my second home" program.

In the last four years, nearly 10,000 people have taken advantage of Malaysia's package of a 10-year renewable multiple entry visa, tax exemption on pensions, a waiver of import and sales tax for vehicles, and permission to import domestic staff.

Developers such as MK Land Holding Bhd and Country Heights Holding Bhd could get a boost if the government goes ahead with plans to make a property purchase of at least 250,000 ringgit ($71,400) a qualification requirement.

In Thailand, LPN Development is reporting brisk sales to Japanese buyers at two of its Bangkok buildings, where a 100 square metres (1,076 square foot) sells for up to $184,700.

Property investment is exempt from the capital control measures introduced last week to halt appreciation of the baht currency.

This year's bloodless military coup had no impact on enthusiasm for the properties, according to LPN managing director Apas Sripayak.

"The locations have led to the strong demand," Apas said, citing the proximity of hospitals and Japanese restaurants. *Reuters*

2007 Polo conference underway

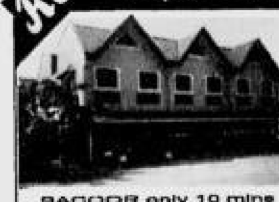
THE OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE Administration (Owwa) has gathered its welfare officers, known as Philippine Overseas Labor Officers from worldwide destinations and its 17 Regional Directors to the "2007 POLO Conference", initially held at the Days Hotel, Tagaytay City Dec. 27 and 28 and to be continued at the Heritage Hotel, Pasay City from Jan. 3 to 5.

Owwa Administrator Marianito D. Roque will discuss activities and events that happened during the year and its impact and effect on the agency and its clients. From the experiences derived at the oversseas posts and the regional offices, Owwa intends to attune its programs and services to better serve its clientele, the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

This activity has been the melting pot of agency priority projects. Currently, Owwa is still deeply involved in the *"Pamaskong Handog 2006,"* wherein OFWs coming home for the Christmas holidays are afforded airport assistance and other services together with MIAA, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Duty Free-Philippines, Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Immigration and Deportation, MicroSoft, Globe, Smart, PhilAm Life, Sunlife, and other institutions that wish to render service to OFWs and their relatives. Other components of the *"Pamaskong Handog"* are the "Presidential Salubong", "Family Day", "OWWISh Ko Lang", and provision of surprise gifts for arriving OFWs. Preceding the Pamaskong Handog is the Model Family of the Year Award 2006 held Nov. 29.

Roque intends to pursue his priority projects and hopes to further energize them in 2007.

RSG GUEVENTHOMES



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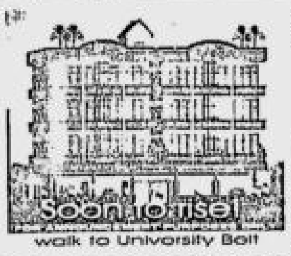

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICE
CENRO-WEST, Lantawan
Pasonanca, Zamboanga City

LEASE OF PUBLIC LANDS

Notice is hereby given that the CENRO-WEST, Lantawan, Pasonanca, Zamboanga City will Lease to the highest bidder at 10:00 A.M. on March 15, 2007, the tract of land covered by Miscellaneous Lease Application No. 097332-21 of Concepcion L. Balaguer.

Location	: Calarian, Zamboanga City
Description	: MLI 0973322-000021
Area :	5,390 square meters
Appraised value of the land	: Php 1,078,000.00
Total appraised value of the property	: Php 14,552,483.04

All bids must be sealed and submitted to the Office of the CENR-WEST, at Lantawan, Pasonanca, Zamboanga City on or before the hour and date stated above and plainly "Bid for the Land described in MLI 097332-21." Bids must be accompanied with cash money order, treasury warrant, certified check, cashier's check for a sum equivalent to ten percentum (10%) of the bid. When a bid is withdrawn after the highest bidder is determined, the corresponding deposit thereof shall be forfeited to the government. No bid shall be less than the appraised value of the land. This Office reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

(Sgd.) TITO L. GADON

(PDI-Dec. 22, 29, 2006; Jan. 5, 12, 19 & 26, 2007)

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
ARKISHIP COMPANY, INC. S-135 G/F, LRI Business Plaza, 210 N. Garcia St., Bel-Air II Village, Makati City	Toshiyuki Takahashi	Branch Manager
JT SUCCESS TRADING INCORPORATED Unit 231 Seafront Garden, Roxas Blvd. Pasay City	Philip Picarelli	Assistant Vice President for Operation
VALESCO-SMS (STRATEGIC MANPOWER SOLUTIONS) INC. Rm. 304-307, Sison Mansion Bldg., No. 2631 Rockefeller St., cor Batangas St., Brgy. San Isidro, Makati City	Michael Antony Williams	Consultant
TURTLESHIP TRADING CORP. M.S.B.F Compound Edsa cor. Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City	Kyoung Hee Kim	Sales Manager
INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES, INC. 3640 Bautista St., Brgy. Palanan, Makati City	Maher Mustafa Ahmad Khalil	Sales and Marketing Consultant
PILIPINAS INTERNATIONAL MARKETING SERVICES, INC. 28/F Orient Square Bldg., Emerald Ave., Ortigas, Pasig City	Trinh Minh Cuong	Vietnamese Call Center Associate
KOREA LAND PHILIPPINES CORP. Palacio Grande, Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila	Heesuk Yoon	General Manager
EXPRESS MOTORS MKTG & SERVICES INC. 190 Mindanao Ave., Bahay Toro, Quezon City	Sun Ryang Kim	Operation Manager
MY ENGLISH LEARNING CENTER, INC. 510 Alpap II Bldg., Madrigal Business Park, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Seok Jun Kang	Sales Manager
A-ONE PHILKOR HOMES INC. U-51 Cosmopolitan, Valero St., Makati City	Myungkyun Jin	Operations Manager
TRISILCO FOLEC PHILIPPINES, INC. 9/F Equitable Tower, Paseo de Roxas, Salcedo Village, Makati City	Randy Lee Teek Hien	Operations Manager

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

ERNESTO C. BIHIS
OIC, Regional Director

(PDI-Dec. 29, 2006)

OBITUARIES

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God has you in His keeping; we have you in our hearts.

In Loving Memory

on the First Death Anniversary of

NESTOR M. FELICIANO

November 14, 1928 – December 30, 2005

President
MISAMIS UNIVERSITY
Ozamis City

Holy Masses will be offered on December 30, 2006 at the following churches:

Christ the King Parish Church *Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City*	8:00 a.m.
St. John of the Cross Chapel, *Ozamis City*	6:00 a.m.
San Lorenzo Parish Church, *Ozamis City*	6:00 a.m.
Immaculate Conception Cathedral, *Ozamis City*	5:15 a.m.
Holy Cross Church, *Lanao Del Norte*	8:00 a.m.
San Isidro Chapel, *Lanao Del Norte*	8:00 a.m.
St. Michael Cathedral Parish, *Iligan City*	5:30 p.m.
Redemptorist Church, *Iligan City*	6:00 a.m. 5:30 p.m.

His beloved wife **Sonia**; children: **Becky**, **Wendy**, **Karen**, **Dina May**, **Raoul** and **Dario**; sisters **Natividad** and **Gloria**; in-laws, grandchildren, relatives and friends would like to request readers to remember him in their prayers and wish to convey their sincere appreciation to all those who have kept him alive in their memories.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

JIMMY W. TAN

March 23, 1957 - December 17, 2006

wish to convey our heartfelt gratitude to all who paid their last respect and grieved with us, offered Masses and prayers, sent flowers, messages of sympathy, kept vigil, joined the funeral rites and who in various generous ways gave us comfort at the time of our great loss and sorrow.

Our most sincere gratitude.

> *"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*
>
> **John 3:16**

Dra. AIDA DE LEON MEDINA

Has entered God's Haven of Rest
on December 27, 2006 at the age of 74.

Her loving family, son **Jomel**; daughter-in-law **Cristy** and her grandchildren **Jem**, **Joey** and **Eric**; sisters **Eva** and **Ofelia**; brother **Ruben** give thanks to the LORD for the blessing of her life.

Her remains lie in state at her residence at #31 Chestnut St., West Fairview, Quezon City.

Interment will be on January 2, 2007, 9:00 a.m. at Himlayang Pilipino, Quezon City.

FORTUNATA DAVID ESTANISLAO

Peacefully joined our Creator
on December 27, 2006 at the age of 87.

Her loving children **Pamfi**, **Junior**, **Edith**, **Mercy**, **Ben**, **Jorge** (†), **Larry**, **Raul**, **Danny** and **Vicki**; grandchildren, great grandchildren, nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

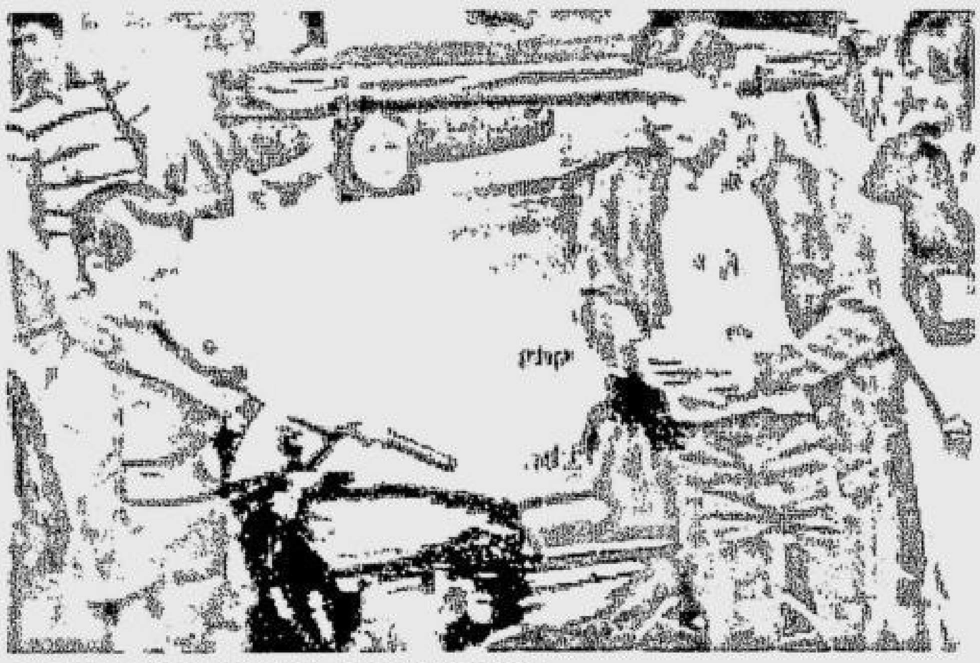
Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on January 2, 2007, 10:00 a.m. at North Cemetery, Manila.

BUSINESS

Imports up 12.5% to $4.68B in October

Steady double-digit growth in exports curbed 10-month trade deficit by 35%



GLOBE WELCOMES RETURNING OFWS
President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo awards to Armando Sales, a returning overseas Filipino worker from Bacolod, a Globe GCash check worth P25,000 and a tricycle raffled off by the Manila International Airport Authority. This forms part of the "Pamaskong Salubong sa OFWs" program of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, which was participated in by Globe Telecom and other private companies and government agencies.

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S IMPORTS ROSE 12.5 percent to $4.679 billion in October from a year ago as firms built up inventory in anticipation of brisk sales during the Christmas season.

Data from the National Statistics Office showed that October figure brought total imports for the first 10 months of the year to $42.858 billion, up 9.2 percent from last year.

Because of the steady double-digit growth in exports, the balance of trade deficit as of October was down by 35 percent to $3.532 billion from $5.437 billion last year.

Balance of trade refers to the difference between earnings from exports and the expenses on imports.

Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning, said the average import growth of 9.2 percent for the first 10 months improved the country's chances of meeting its 5.5 percent economic growth target for 2006.

Electronics were the top imports in October, accounting for 52.1 percent of the bill or $2.439 billion, and most of these are used as raw materials in the production of finished consumer electronic goods, the country's top export earner.

The second-biggest imports were mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials, spending for which hit $583.58 million, up 49.8 percent from last year.

Industrial machinery and equipment were the third-biggest imports for the month, with expenses reaching $181.9 million, up 10.1 percent year-on-year.

Transport equipment followed at $173.27 million, down 11.1 percent from the same month last year.

Imported textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles and related materials were the fifth top imports in October at $98.54 million, 5.1 percent lower from a year ago.

Other top imports for October were: iron and steel, $91.12 million; chemicals, $90.16 million; plastics, $81.83 million; telecommunication equipment and electrical machinery, $62.19 million; and, cereals and cereal preparation, $53.16 million.

The NSO said the Philippines' top sources of imports in October were the United States, accounting for $773.31 million of the total import bill for the month; Japan, $665.20 million; Taiwan, $412.91; China, $341.03 million; Korea, $288.21 million; Saudi Arabia, $251.27 million; Thailand, $203.52 million; Hong Kong, $194.51 million; and Malaysia, $157.08 million.

Jatropha, a wonder plant

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

IF YOU RECALL, THE WORD SERENDIPITY comes from the story of legendary hero Serendipidus. Instead of strictly following his well-formulated plan to get a well known treasure at the end of the world, he chose to explore interesting sights that he encountered by chance. He found out that taking the time to look at these "serendipidous" occurrences yielded more valuable treasures than that which he initially planned to secure.

In some ways, this happened to Ramon Tan and jatropha.

From urban to rural

Tan is the president of Carica Livelihood and Entrepreneur Assistance Program. He now focuses his attention on rural rather that urban areas. But this was not always the case. He started out following the commonly desired yuppie route of working for large urban based corporations.

For most of his career, he occupied positions in firms like SGV, Colgate-Palmolive and Pfizer. He then decided to quit the corporate world and is now one of the leading advocates of jatropha, known as "tuba-tuba" in Tagalog, "tagatagumbao" in Ilocano, "galumbang" in Pampanga and "kasla" in the Visayas.

This common hedge plant has always been known for its curative and medicinal properties.

But recently, it became the focus of much attention when it was cited as an alternative fuel source because of the recently passed Biofuels Act.

An accident

Tan went from the corporate world to the herbal-medicinal-health area by accident, but he nevertheless become one of the biggest jatropha advocates.

In the November 2006 MARID Agribusiness Digest, Ronald Mangubat quotes Tan: "Everything happened by accident. There were people who said the plant is good for arthritis and healing of wounds. So at first, we got into it for the herbal value. Then one time, I was having dinner with Neda Secretary Romy Neri and he asked me, 'Ramon, do you know jatropha's used for diesel?' I said yes, but I clarified, we don't have many jatropha for commercial production. That's how I started my research."

That research has provided the impetus for what could be a massive job generation program for the country. The recently passed law sponsored by Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri and Sen. Miriam Santiago mandates the use of biodiesel as transport fuel.

Aside from averting a looming price crisis because of skyrocketing fuel prices, the economic benefits from this law are significant: Generating 300,000 new jobs; yielding foreign exchange savings of $825 billion over a 10-year period, and guaranteeing demand of an average 300 million liters of biofuel annually.

With jatropha as a feasible raw material source for biofuel, the market demand for this wonder plant has grown tremendously.

In a recent interview with Tan, he said: "I'm still a finance man at heart. I know that jatropha's expected profitability is very attractive. For a total project investment of only P20,000 per hectare, you can get a two and a half-year payback period with an ROI increasing to 176 percent in the fourth year."

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Production	500	1,000	2,000	3,000
Value per KG	P15	P15	P15	P15
Total Income	P7,500	P15,000	P30,000	P45,000
Expenses	1,500	3,000	6,000	9,000
Net Income	P5,500	P12,000	P24,000	P36,000
ROI	22 %	44 %	88 %	176 %

Below is a table which shows jatropha's financial feasibility for one hectare:

Other benefits

Aside from profitability, a jatropha enterprise offers other benefits.

It is labor intensive and requires two full-time farmers working year-round. It can be planted in areas considered not fertile for most crops, and therefore provides livelihood opportunities in idle lands as well as achieving ecological balance.

A number of individuals are already investing in a big way in jatropha plantations.

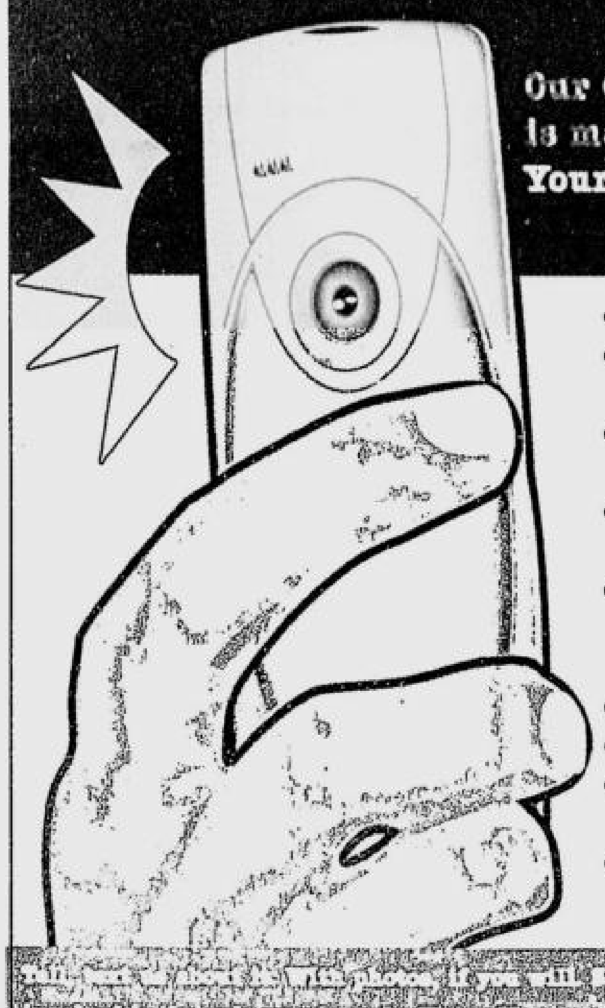
Fr. Edwin Mercado has started a 20-ha plantation in Puerto Princesa, Palawan while former Gov. Antonio Leviste is expanding his 10-ha jatropha farm to 400 ha in Calatagan, Batangas.

Tan himself is spearheading an initial planting and oil milling project in Catanauan, Quezon with an initial planting program of 1,000 ha and and initial capacity of 10,000 kg a day.

Perhaps the escalating fuel prices, passage of the Biofuels Act into law, increasingly felt need for creating jobs in our poor rural areas, and the new emphasis on natural, non-chemical based cures that have combined to help us discover jatropha as a wonder plant.

For more information on this, please call or text Tan at 0917-623-2330 or email caricaphil@yahoo.com

(The author is Agriwatch chair; former Cabinet secretary for presidential flagship programs and projects and former undersecretary of agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agriwatchphil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8522112)



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- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
Contributing editors
Apples Aberin-Sadhwani
and Jenni Epperson

FASHION
The shining

SHIMMERY pink turtleneck, P1,950, under a black sequined tube dress, P3,650; red glitter belt, P895, all by Zara. Gold necklace with owl pendant, P1,650, and cuff, P1,000, both by Cru. Silver wire necklace with green pendant and earrings, P445, by Dorothy Perkins. Gold chain necklace with black beads from Wade. Black sequined heels, P1,970, by VNG

Style pledges 2007

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

With the new year, it's time to turn a new fashion page

HAPPY NEW YEAR! NOW'S your chance to turn a new fashion page as you ring in 2007! Here's a list of possible New Year's fashion resolutions that you may want to consider:

1 Have a merry makeover. Stuck in a fashion rut? Now's the best time to get a new, more exciting look. You can either get a new 'do or color (blunt cuts and dark, rich colors are in!), or a major style overhaul, if need be.

Sometimes, all you need is a tweak here or there. In which case, consider the use of bright colors, textures and trendy accessories to bring life to any old outfit.

2 Support the local fashion industry. Buy Pinoy! The local fashion industry will thrive if we all patronize talented Filipino designers like current favorites Dennis Lustico, Ivarluski Aseron, Cary Santiago or relatively new but equally gifted Patty Eustaquio, Debbie T. Co and Mitzi Quilendrino, to name a few. The local retail market can also benefit from our business so go out there and check out the offerings of innovative brands such as Sapato Manila, Aranaz, Bench, Bayo, Fino, Folded & Hung and the like.

3 Don't buy fakes. Iconic designer handbags, shoes and accessories are must-haves for every fashionista but there really is no sense in buying an imitation and passing it off as the genuine thing. You'll only be fooling yourself and supporting an underground/illegal operation.

Save up for the real thing or stick to generic items of good quality!

STYLE/ C2

GOLD pailettes dress, P4,550, and silver lamé short gloves, P1,350, both by Zara. Bronze beads, P395, by Dorothy Perkins. Gold necklace with owl pendant, P1,650, and gold cuff, P1,000, all by Cru. Strappy gold heels, P1,510, by VNC

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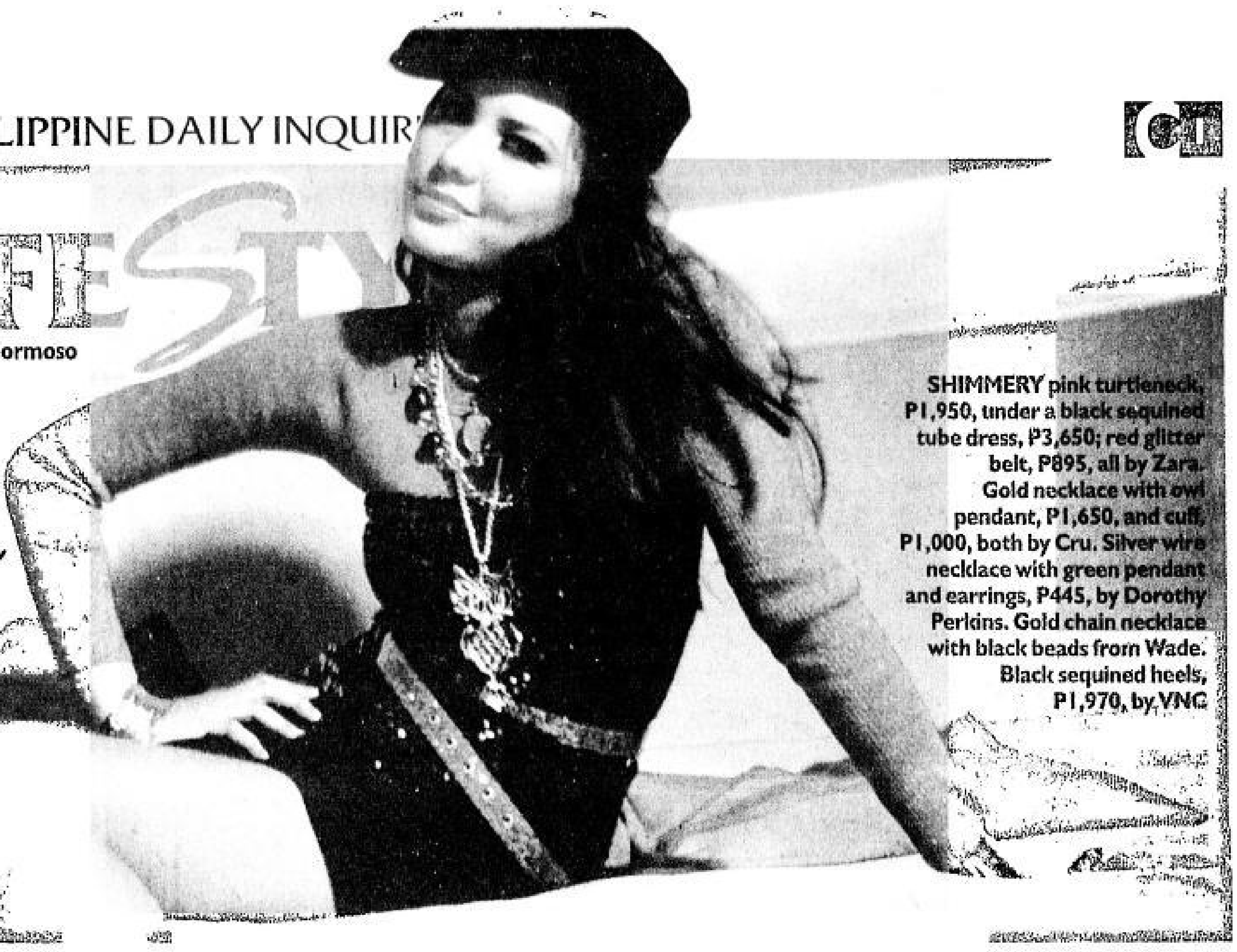
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Contributing editors
Apples Aberin-Sadhwani
and Jenni Epperson

FASHION

shining



SHIMMERY pink turtleneck, P1,950, under a black sequined tube dress, P3,650; red glitter belt, P895, all by Zara. Gold necklace with owl pendant, P1,650, and cuff, P1,000, both by Cru. Silver wire necklace with green pendant and earrings, P445, by Dorothy Perkins. Gold chain necklace with black beads from Wade. Black sequined heels, P1,970, by VNC

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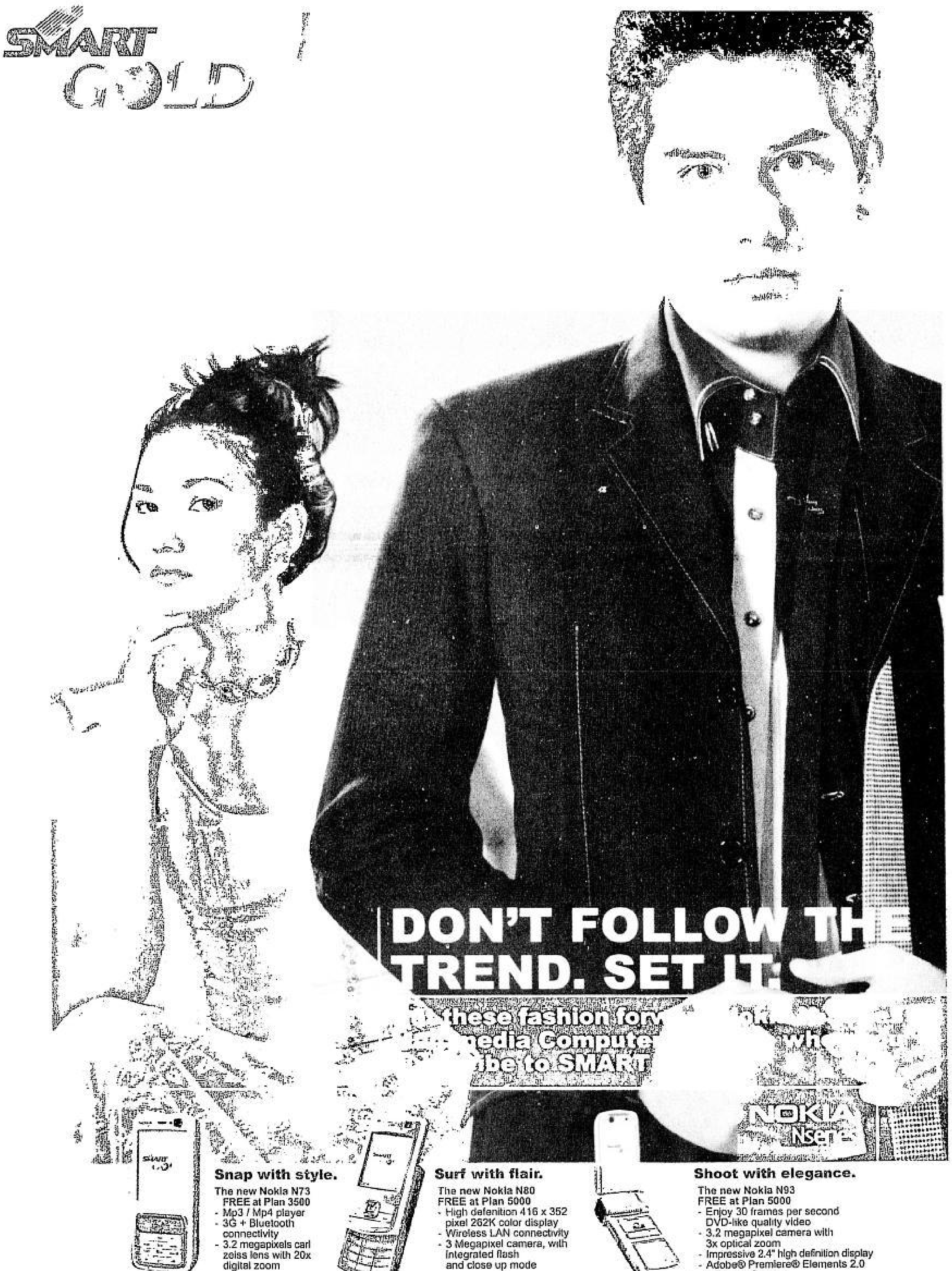
SMART GOLD



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Fashion resolutions

Some of Manila's style-setters share their fashion resolutions for 2007

"I think it would be to try more new local designers, other than my all-time favorites like Ivar (Aseron), Randy (Ortiz), Kate (Torralba) and Dennis (Lustico). I'm also eyeing this limited-edition Chopard watch, so that means I have to change my ways and spend less."

[illegible]

"I promise to change my rat-pack ways by weeding out of my closet clothes I haven't worn in 10 years because I was hoping they'd come back in style, and just give them to charity."

Liza Ilarde-Cuenca, Jetset editor in chief

"Fashion-wise, I would say my resolution is to pare down on accessories, especially jewelry. Pared-down is fresh for the New Year. I'm tired of too many necklaces, too many bracelets, and over- accessorizing, in general."

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"Every time I shop for new things, I will try to wear them or use them as often as possible. Usually, what happens is that each time we purchase something we tend to treat it with special care, to the point of wearing that item only once or twice a year. Next thing you know it ends up stuck in the closet and out of fashion."

Henri Calayag,
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"To actually make time to do some serious and strategic shopping! And to finally organize my fashion reserves so I can save valuable time when getting dressed."

Myrza Sison,
Marie Claire editor in chief

"To continue keeping my ears on the ground and giving my best be it in my craft or in my sport."

Vic Barba, designer/
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"Simplify and wear something other than black."

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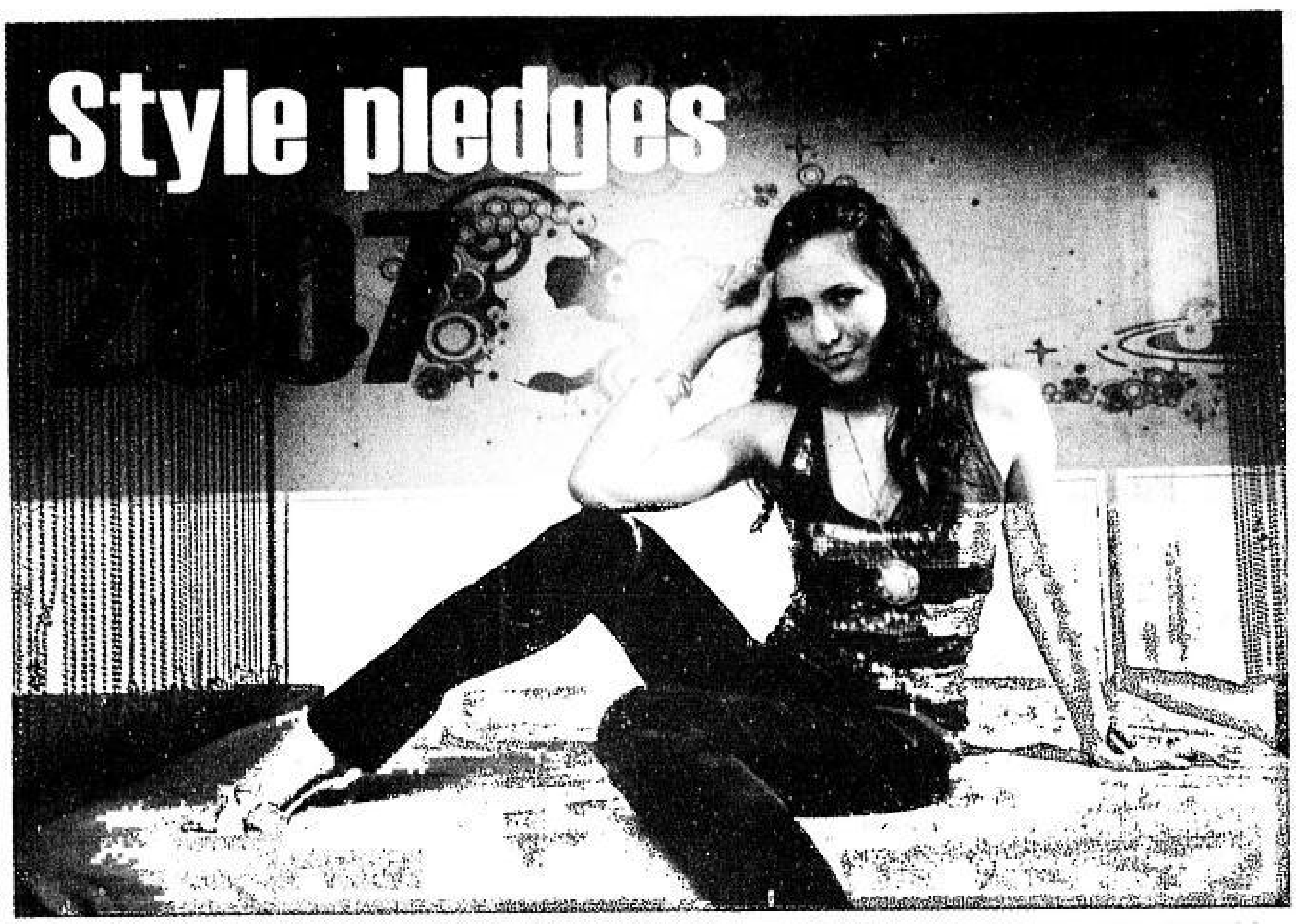
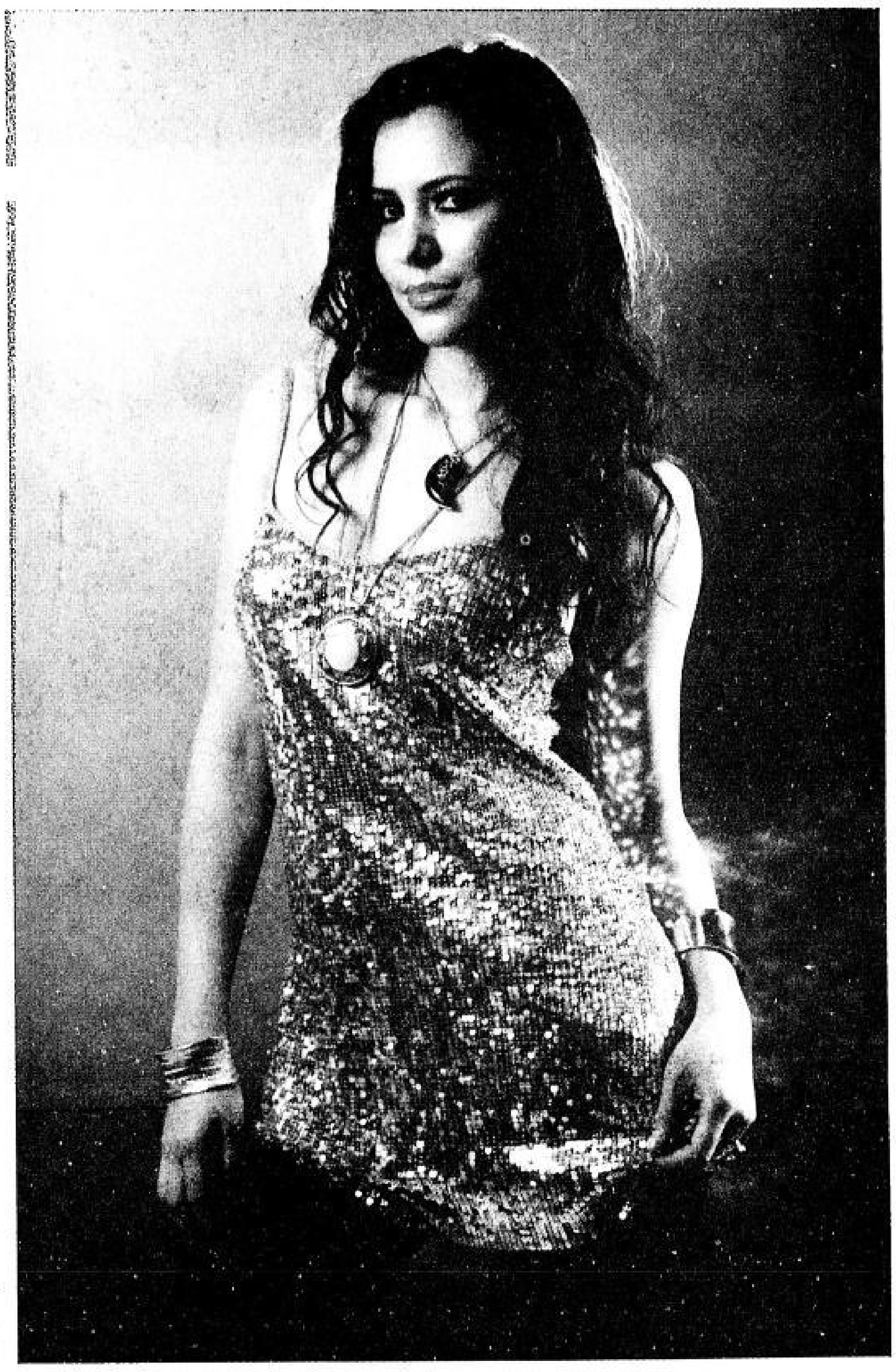
Style pledges 2007



GRAY tank top with gold sequins, P1,695, by Topshop. Satin skinny pants, P2,450, by Zara. Gold heels, P1,730, by VNC. Gold and mother-of-pearl medallion, P2,500; and gold cuff, P1,000, both from Cru



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From page C1

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5 Try out a trend or two.

Fashion is fun and dynamic so this year, make sure you keep up by trying out a trend or two each season. There are a lot of trend options to choose from for spring/summer. Go light and breezy with swingy trapeze dresses or try a bit of volume (if you still haven't!) via pouf and puff details. Graphic elements also rule the runways in the form of stark black and white pieces or jigsaw-like cutouts. And although skinny jeans and pants are still in, try out wide-legged pants for variety.

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Overhaul your wardrobe and get rid of items you haven't worn for several years. Although fashion is cyclical, you don't have to keep every single article of clothing and accessory from season's past. Choose a few favorite, defining pieces to keep, and donate the rest to charity, or have a garage sale, if you wish. Not only will you have more space for new purchases, you'll also have a clutter-free New Year!

7 And for New Year's Eve, dazzle brighter than the fireworks and be a star

Don't shy away from the limelight! Welcome the New Year with a bang by donning blindingly brilliant metallic or iridescent clothing that's probably brighter than the fireworks. Take your cue from stylist Mela de Luna, who put together this editorial to show us how to dress boldly in metallic pieces that are [illegible] hot this season.

E-mail the author at afashion@inquirer.com.ph

Photography Michael Mariano
Styling Mela de Luna
Photography assistant Martin Mariano
Makeup Benjie Angeles for Shu Uemura
Hair Bea Misa using Kiehl's Stylist Series
Model April Tanhueco
Special thanks to Leo V. Vergara
of BEDspace Bar, 3/F Greenbelt 3

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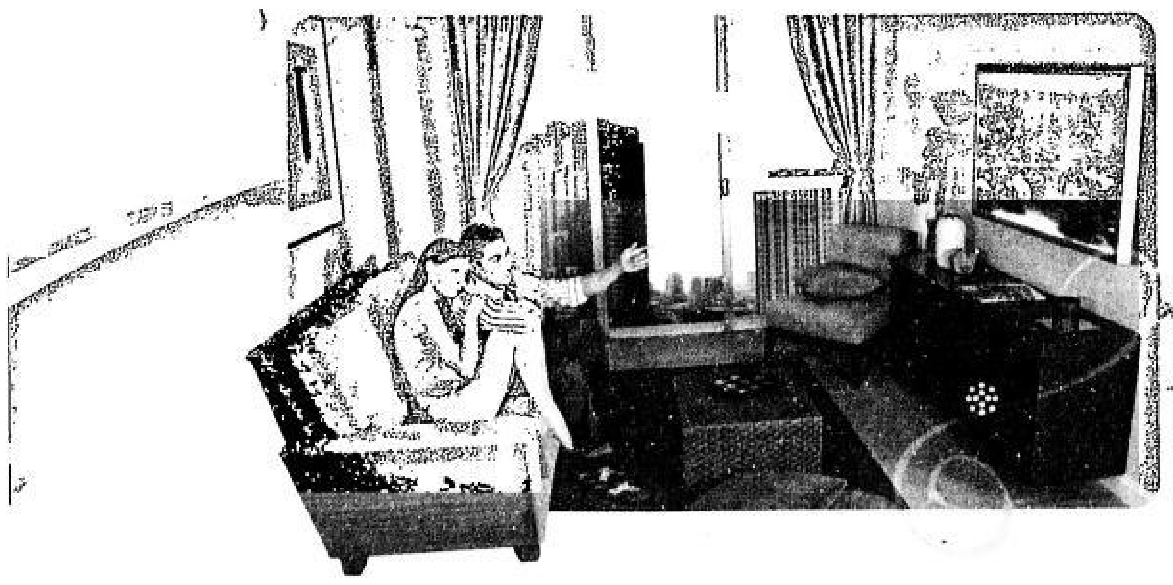
Per DTI - NCR Permit No. 4659 Series of 2006



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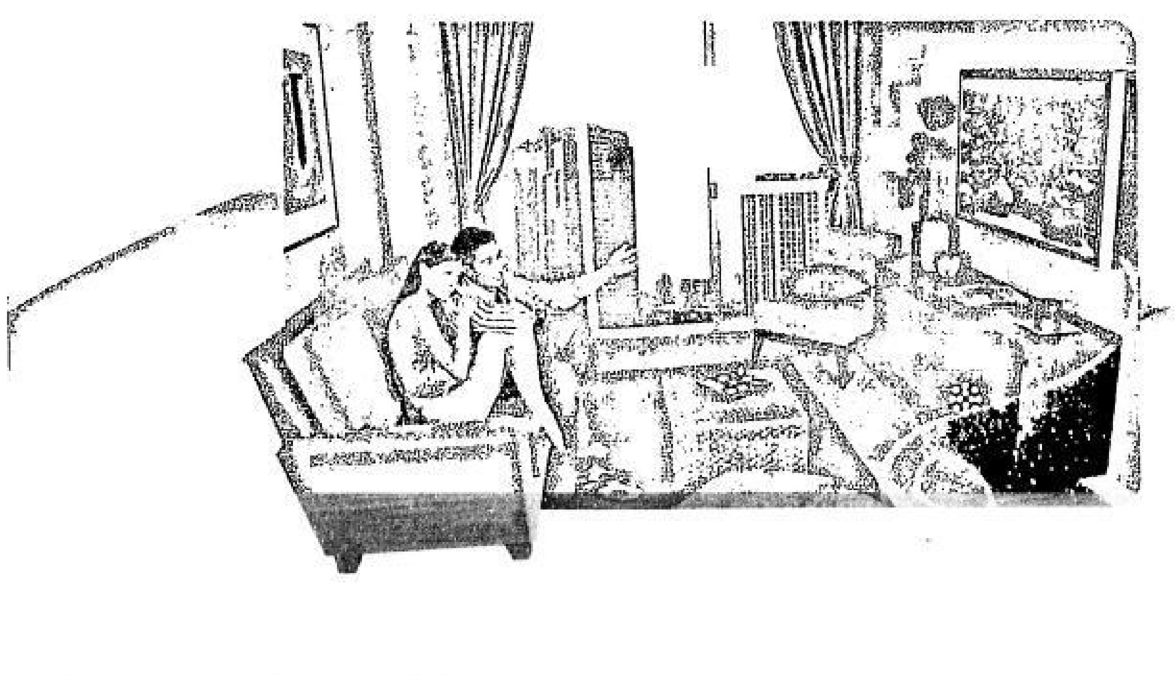

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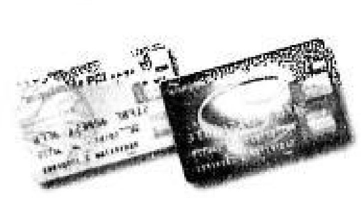

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Per DTI - NCR Permit No. 4659 Series of 2006

"Since we believe that denim will be stronger in 2007, we aim to give birth to an expanded Overhauled jeans line with newer cuts, finishes, textures and other details, to create a more stylized pair of jeans. T-shirt silhouettes will also complement this change, as the demand for stretch tees in cotton and pique increases. Though the demand for basic American loose fit is still high, we cannot ignore that there is a growing market of those who prefer the slightly tighter fit, as body-conscious Pinoys have found time to hit the gym and are now ready to flaunt their bodies."

**Ben Chan,
Bench creative director**

"I did it already. I took out all the clothes I hadn't used in a long time and gave them to my house helpers. Also, I'll find myself a great pair of huge, huge round glasses. Perfect for year '07."

Millet Arzaga, stylist

"Quality over quantity!"

Xeng Zulueta, Shu Uemura chief make-up artist

"To continuously work and support the industry in uplifting its standards to global competitiveness."

Randy Ortiz, designer

"Reinvent, experiment, explore different designers and looks. Never get too comfortable with a look. It dates you."

**Leica Carpo, partner,
Modern Mythology**

"My New Year fashion resolution is to clean my closet and get rid of my old stuff that will remind me that I was once a size 36."

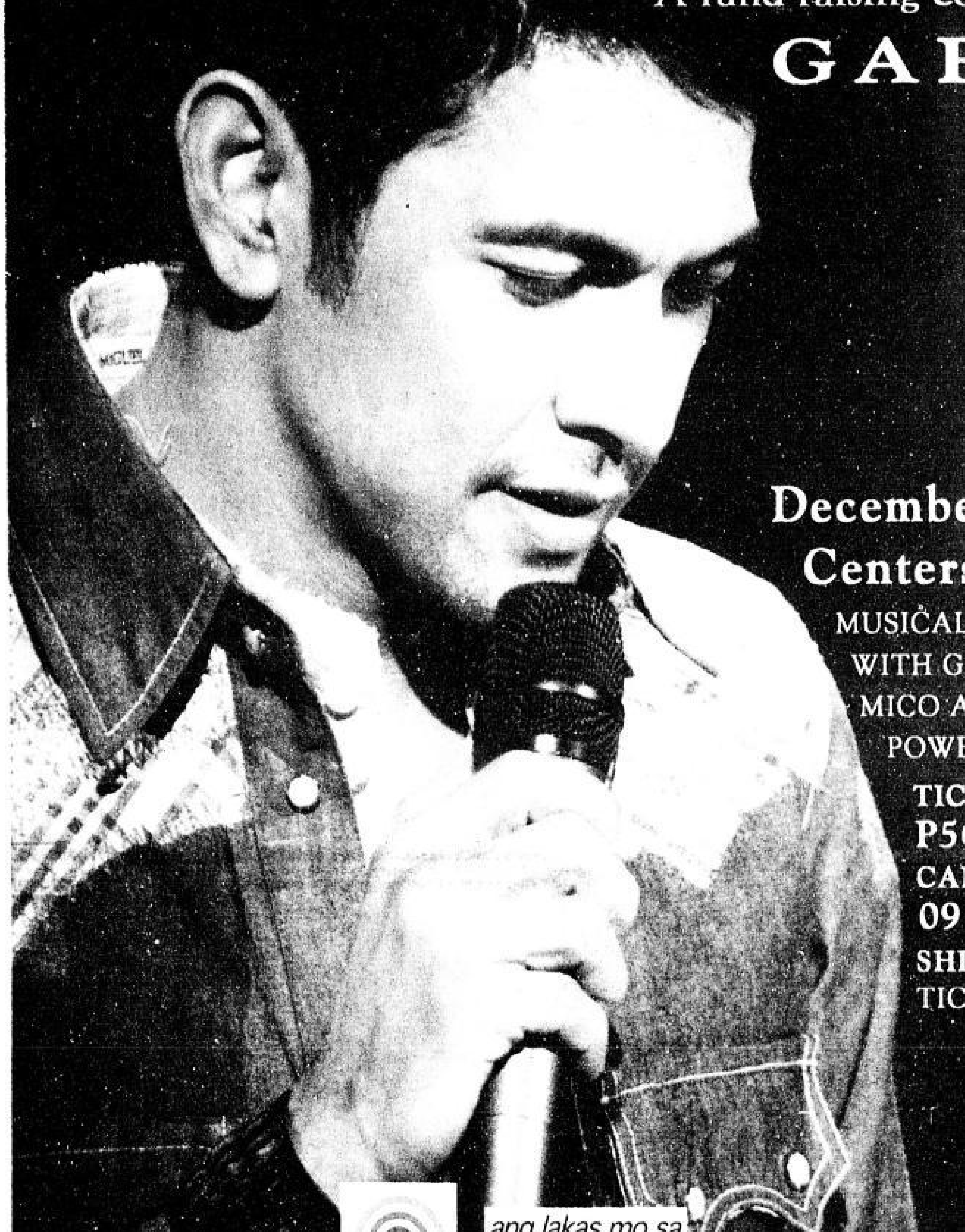
Robby Carmona, director

"Fashion is both a business and an art. My resolution would be better service, quality and design, a bigger production capacity, new ventures (i.e. ready-to-wear). Fashion is also never serious so I'm looking forward to more laughter."

Dennis Lustico, designer

"I aim to continue what I've been doing since high school, which is to spring-clean my closet twice a year and spread my couture to those in need. Fashion is for everyone, after all!"

Bianca Valerio, model/TV host



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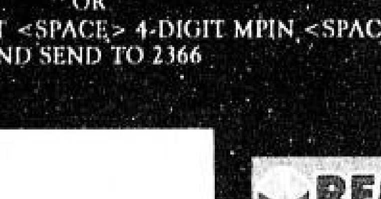

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4659 Series of 2006

HOSTESS Dr. Vicki Belo, Dr. Gerard Wolf, honoree Dr. Francois Strawczynky and Babette Aquino

XAVIER Anthony and Rochel Balulu

MILLET Mananquil, Rhoda Campos A. and Vince Aldanese

DUANE Santos and Cynthia Carreon

JOJI Dingcong and Divine Lee

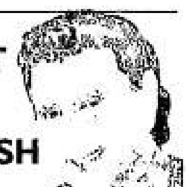
LALY Etroit

MANDY Santos

GIGING Garcia, Carol Garcia and Baby Araneta

Madeover Cosmo Manille toasts French cosmetic surgeon

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH



Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

DURING THE HOLIDAY RUSH, ONE AFFAIR stood out, *palanggas*. It was a fabulous evening when champagne bottles were uncorked one after another, whilst a chic crowd gathered in the eye-catching living room of the sprawling home of one of the country's premier cosmetic surgeons, stunning Dr. **Vicki Belo**, no less.

The dinner was in honor of Dr. **Francois Strawczynky**, world-renowned French dermatologist whose specialty is face liposuction and inventor of new techniques in Mesotherapy, dahlings.

It felt like a night in Paris, with the best of Manille and Paris mixing together for a fantastic dinner, excellently catered by none other than Pepato and Cibo's talented **Margarita Fores**.

The cuisine was a salute to familiar French cuisine, given a Filipino twist. From the mouthwatering *lechon* carvings to the superb pan-roasted Chilean Sea Bass, elegantly presented steaming within its own parchment box, and the sinfully calorific Tiramisu, the menu left everyone craving for seconds, *palanggas*.

Topping it off was the delectable dessert buffet specially prepared by top pastry chef **Buddy Trinidad**. Just looking at his chocolate Valrhona sculpture already proved gastronomic indeed.

The atmosphere was so cosmopolitan, *palanggas*. The guest list was any hostess' dream come true, with many of Manille's Francophiles present, from high-society hotshots such as the beautiful **Susan Reyes** to Alliance Francaise de Manille director **Olivier Dintinger** and **Louis Tehvinin**.

Also present were the French Embassy's **Carolle Lucas**; vivacious **Babette Aquino**, who jetted from her home in Paris to welcome her doctor friend to Manille; classy **Sigalit Djemal**; architect **Ramon Antonio**; fashion plate **Nina Garcia**; stunningly beautiful **Nikki Prieto Teodoro**; Bulgari's **Mario Katigbak**; and adorable newlyweds **Vince** and **Rhoda Aldanese**.

The hip set included **Tessa Prieto Valdes**; stylist **Mandy** and **Duane Santos**; **Mons Romulo** and **Sander Tantoco**; **Joji Dingcong**, talent manager and corporate-imaging specialist; Philippine Tatler's editor, **Anton San Diego**; fashion-forward **Tim Yap**; and the prince of alta moda, **Inno Sotto**, *natch*.

The guests got to take a little of France home with them, with samplers of French fragrances made with essences of Bach flower, and boxes of yummy French macaroons, to indulge even the sweetest of cravings.

Was the dinner a success? Judging by the number of empty Moet bottles left at the bar, it certainly was! Leave it to the fabulously glamorous Vicky B. to throw such a Belo-ssisima party, dahlings.

Nene's day

She is renowned as one of Cosmo Manille's top hostesses, *palanggas*. So it's no wonder that when she celebrated another dazzling year of her life, she had to entertain in style.

When *moi* got an invite to the formal dinner-dance party at the Manila Polo Club to celebrate the birthday of that charity-oriented woman of substance, **Nene Santos Leonor**, how could *moi* say no, *palanggas*?

Welcoming the chosen 200 guests was the hostess and her husband, businessman **Jun Leonor**, with tons of help from their good-looking children, who escorted us to our respective tables.

Apres a short "thank you for being here on my special day" by Nene L., there was a rush to the several buffet tables around the main lounge, dahlings. Needless to say, the food was lavish and excellently prepared as usual, which Nene L. is well-known for.

Shortly after, the exhilarating dance party for everyone got on a roll, the repertoire of the good house music was varied, so no one got floored, *palanggas*, and everybody else was rocking the dance floor to this and that type of music.

The hotshot invitees were a mix of public officials and top personalities from the town's society set, such as Sen. **Loi Ejercito**; former Sen. **Loren Legarda**; Gov. **Raul** and **Tessie Daza**; Justice **Jun** and **Evelyn Ranada**; **Ronnie** and **Menchu Concepcion**; **Ado Escudero**; **Vic** and **Nenette Puyat**; **Ruben** and **Mimi Valerio**; **Nikkie Valerio**; **Pong** and **Chit Salud**; **Becky Garcia**; **Rupert** and **Tina Jacinto**; and **Offie Recto**, plus tons of others too well-known to mention, dahlings.

To everyone's most cherished woman, Nene Leonor, may you have more luxurious birthdays to come! Cheers, *palangga*!

Rock-and-roll affair

What better way to get a packed audience for a musical night at the jumping Captain's Bar of the elegant Mandarin Hotel than having the original Rock and Roll King **Ramon Jacinto** performing with his hot, swinging RJ band, *palanggas*?

Adding spice to this sizzling affair were the singing performances from alumni of rival schools Ateneo and La Salle.

But that wasn't all that was in store that awesome, fun night, dahlings. The big surprise number was former top polo player, businessman **Joe Vincent Madrigal de Leon**, making his first public appearance as a singer. When he rendered two love songs of the '60s and dedicated them to his wife, **Marybeth Lopez**, he got thunderous clapping and shouts of more, more, more!

Well, *palanggas*, it seems we'll be hearing "more" of Joe Vince M. de Leon and his newfound career as a singer.

May you have a happy and healthy new year, *palanggas*.

SUGAR baron Albertito Lopez and wife, former Guimaras Gov. Emily Relucio L.; and Rep. Willie Villarama

CHING Montinola, Mercy Tuason and Marivic Concepcion

TITO de Guzman, May Santos N. and husband, renowned plastic surgeon Jeorge Neri

JOJO and Henry Zabarte, with Chona Lopez

FE SANTOS Rodriguez

ILOCOS Sur Gov. Chavit Singson and gorgeous Che Tiongson S.

MELLIE Romero and husband, business magnate Louie Ablaza

LETTY S. Bonoan

ALL IN THE FAMILLE: Iñigo de Leon with half-sister Nikki Prieto Teodoro; man of the hour Joe Vincent Madrigal de Leon with wife Marybeth Lopez and son, handsome Miguel de Leon

PANCHO Escaler, Gina Madrigal Montinola, Ambassador Ching Escaler and BPI's Gigi Montinola

LINDA Panlilio, Jojo Zabarte, Marrot Moreno and Frannie Jacinto

MARILOU Magsaysay, Lilibeth and Paqui Campos, and Mila Wales

CLOSE PALS. Harrison Plaza and Tatler's Irene Martel Francisco, Mely Concepcion H. and husband Paing Hechanova, and top cardiologist Randy Francisco

WOMEN of substance. Former Sen. Loren Legarda and author Bing Carrion-Buck

TESSIE Villarama and Cinderella's royal, Therese Coronel-Santos

CHIT Dee; woman of the hour Nene S. Leonor; Sen. Loi Ejercito, Justa Tantoco and Karen Macasaet; (standing) Vicky Cadungog, Josie Bernardo, Roi Phillips, Rose Libongco, Brenda Reyes, Rose Sibug, Pacita de Guzman, Pitang Tiongson and Offie Recto

THE LEONOR *FAMILLE*. Rean and Dina Leonor-Villasor; couple of the hour Jun Leonor and his wife, top hostess and birthday lady Nene Santos Leonor; Dennis and Mia Puyat-Leonor; and Junboy and Gina Ocampo-Leonor

Samsung and MetroWear elevate Philippine fashion

2006 was a banner year for Philippine fashion design with the expansion of **MetroWear**. Always a much-awaited event in the fashion scene every year for the past four years, **MetroWear 2006** saw the dynamic collaboration of **Metro Magazine** and Samsung to produce a series of fashion collections that became known as MetroWear Series. This culminated in Metrowear Gala —a parade of 2007 collections of the country's top 23 designers.

This was the first time in years that Manila saw a sustained fashion show series of the foremost designers.

Samsung President Spencer Shim defines such collaboration: "Samsung recognizes the contribution of Metro Magazine and ABS-CBN Publishing in relentlessly promoting the fashion industry in the Philippines, and congratulates them for it. That direction fuses with Samsung's heritage of design and technology. Samsung has a track record that hinges not only on style but more so on substance. With our partnership with MetroWear we harness both and more importantly, it becomes a seamless bonding with our consumers at first rate level."

Indeed the sleek and cutting-edge collections of the top fashion designers served as perfect complement to the subtle and clean lines of the Samsung Ultra Edition phone—the chic black fashion accessory of the moment—and the Bordeaux LCD television.

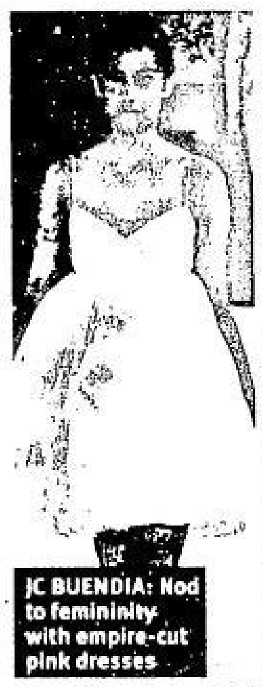
Every week from October 4 to November 8 at the Rockwell Loft, the leading designers presented 10 to 15 outfits each in the holiday collections of the Metrowear Series. Fashion stalwarts Rajo Laurel, Rhett Eala and designer-of-the-moment Dennis Lustico opened the Series. They were followed in succeeding weeks by Jun Escario, Katrina Goulbourn, Lulu Tan Gan, Ivarluski Aseron, Anthony Nocom, Randy Ortiz, Joey Samson, and the Series' finale Cesar Gaupo, who also bared his shoe line.

The December 7 Metrowear Gala at the Rockwell Tent unveiled the 2007 lines of Aseron, Vittorio, JC Buendia, Ito Curata, Mike de la Rosa, Patrice Ramos-Diaz, Rhett Eala, Escario, Arcy Gayatin, Oj Hofer, Laurel, Jesus Lloren, Ignacio Loyola, Nocom, Efren Ocampo, Tippi Ocampo, Ortiz, Frederick Peralta, Philip Rodriguez, Renee Salud, Samson, Cary Santiago and Tan Gan.

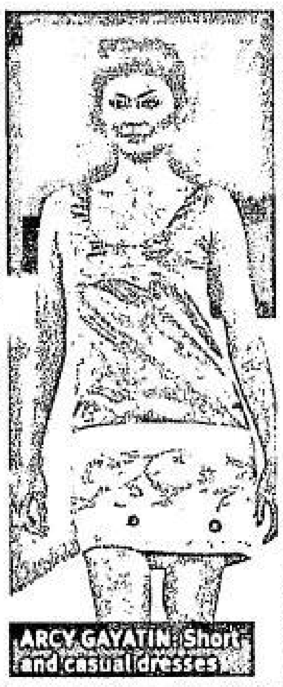
These previews drew exciting reviews, discussions of trends. Just as important, they were top drawers of crowds that cut across style and age levels. The country's Who's Who were there every week, as well as the fashionistas and movers and shakers of Philippine lifestyle.

Indeed with Samsung's Metrowear, the bar has been raised for Philippine fashion. Next year's Metrowear will be the event again to look forward to.

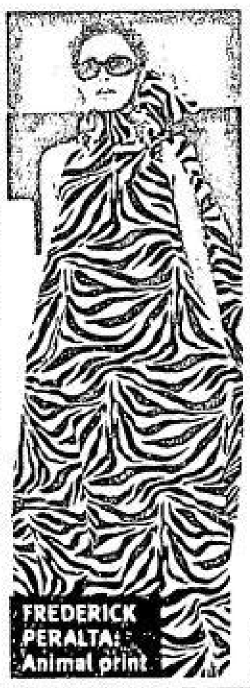
SAMSUNG ULTRA SLIM EDITION: The chic black fashion accessory of the moment



JC BUENDIA: Nod to femininity with empire-cut pink dresses

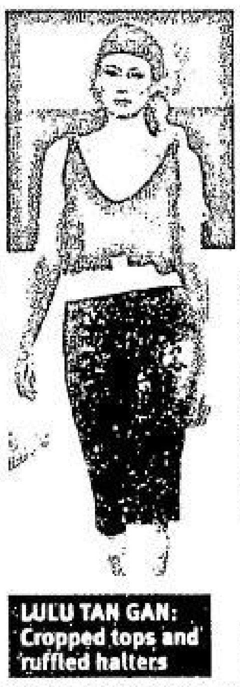


ARCY GAYATIN: Short and casual dresses

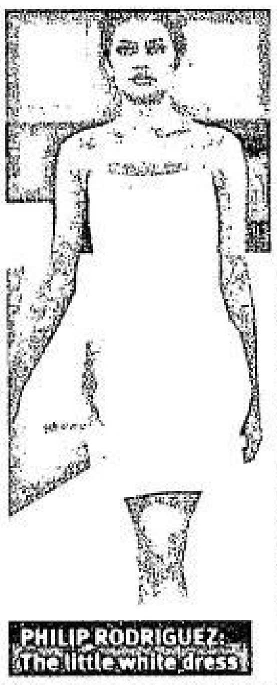


FREDERICK PERALTA: Animal print

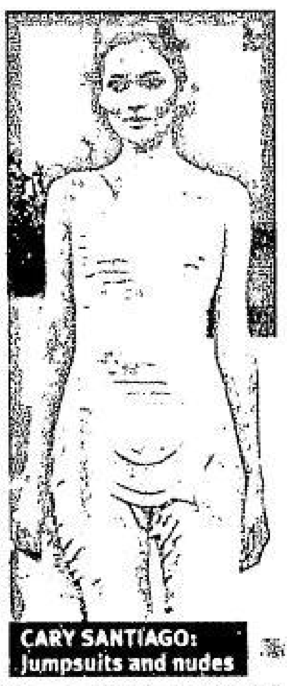
MIKE DELA ROSA: Silky blacks



LULU TAN GAN: Cropped tops and ruffled halters



PHILIP RODRIGUEZ: The little white dress



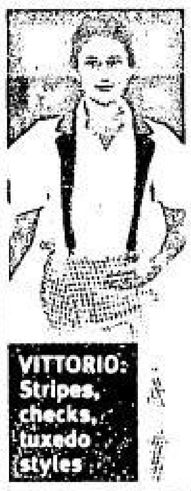
CARY SANTIAGO: Jumpsuits and nudes

PATRICE RAMOS DIAZ: Summery prints, flora fauna

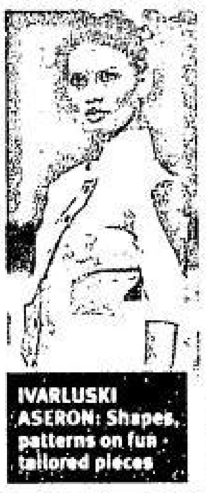
RAJO LAUREL: Gold/high-shine

RANDY ORTIZ: Blues/Mix of prints & patterns

RENEE SALUD: Black and white



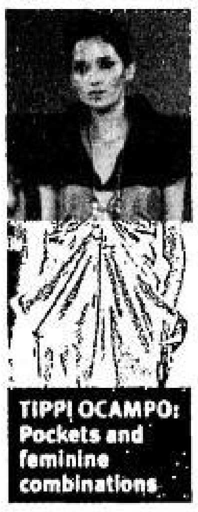
VITTORIO: Stripes, checks, tuxedo styles



IVARLUSKI ASERON: Shapes, patterns on fun tailored pieces

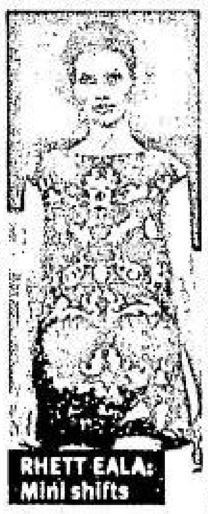
OJ HOFER: Low-neck tops/jumpsuits

ANTHONY NOCOM: Sheen

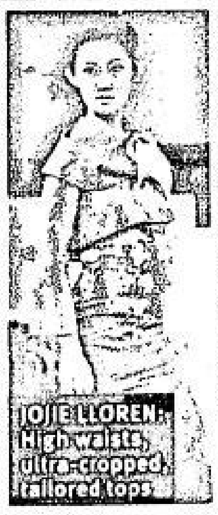


TIPPI OCAMPO: Pockets and feminine combinations

JOEY SAMSON: Layering, shapeless shifts/dresses

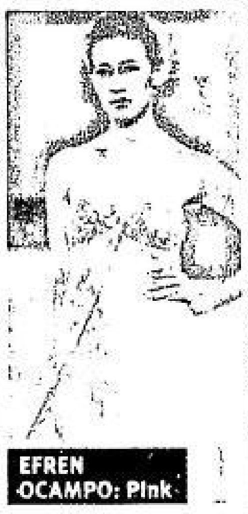


RHETT EALA: Mini shifts



JOJIE LLOREN: High waists, ultra-cropped, tailored tops

JUN ESCARIO: Short and breezy/ billowing fabrics



EFREN OCAMPO: Pink

IGNACIO LOYOLA: Summery prints on prints/flora fauna

ITO CURATA: Luxe embellishments

Thelma Sioson San Juan with Samsung/ Cheil's Pen Roque

Mel Cuevas with Samsung's Angie Limbaco

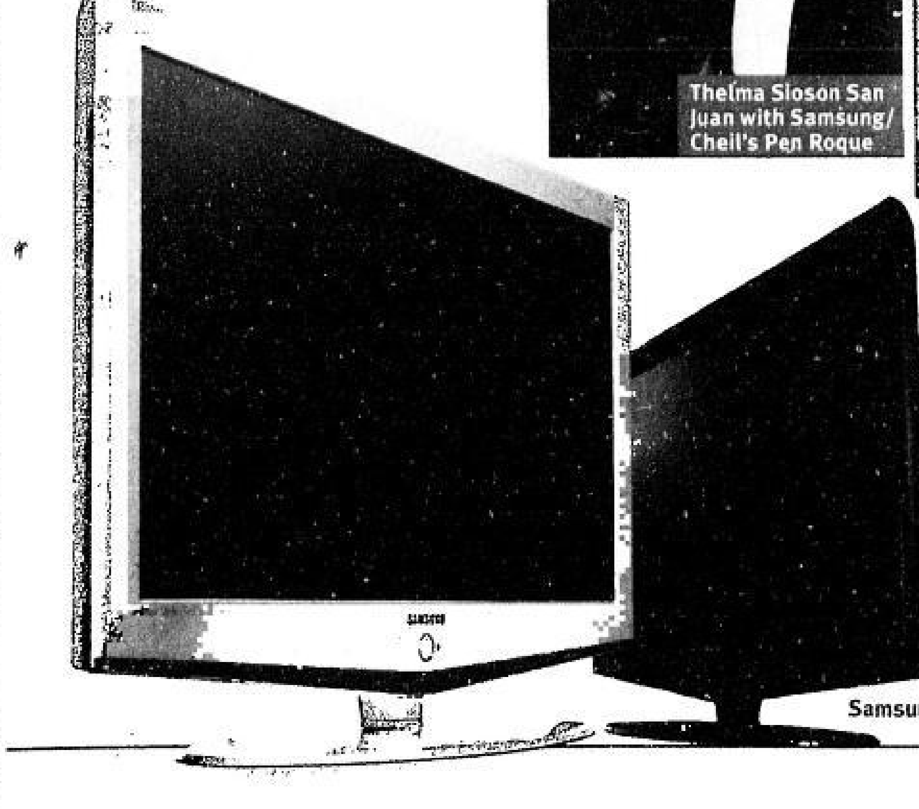
Daphne Oseña-Paez

Mutya Laxa

Lulu Tan Gan and Sigalit Djemal

Richard and Lucy Torres-Gomez

Leica Carpo



Samsung Bordeaux LCD TV

Grace Barbers-Baja and Australian Vogue's Julie Ebbinghans

Charo Santos-Concio and Monchet Olives

Tippi Ocampo, Karen Davila and Ernie Lopez

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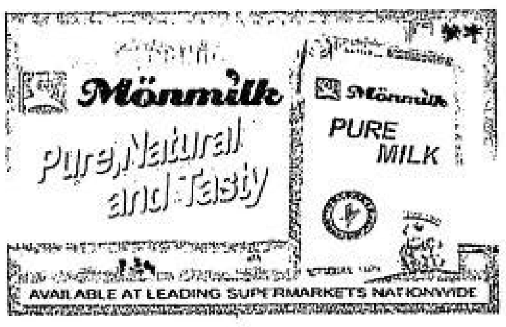

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LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

What to remember about 2006

It was the year of the stockings and the metallics.
It was the year of Coco Banana and 'The Devil Wears Prada'

JC Buendia

EFREN Ocampo

WHEW! REACHING THE END OF 2006 has been like making it to the finish line in a marathon. You feel a mix of exhilaration, stress and fatigue, relief and pride about having reached the targets you set at the beginning of the year. It's an indescribable mix of emotions, thoughts and moods. But like the year before, the end is, as you say in street-lingo, "photo finish."

What will we remember about '06? In a flash, I'd say:

Trends: The return of the stockings (I never thought I'd see the day again when they would come back), the full bangs and the cigarette-thin jeans now known as the skinny. Of course, hardly had the skinnies landed on the retail shelves then you had trousers ballooning into elephantine proportions again, just like the elephant pants of the '60s. In short, in jeans and pants, you go either super loose, straight or ultra-tight.

Then there was the return of the metallics.

Beyond the trends, there were the billboards falling (almost) on our heads at the height of "Milenyo," and you thought the worst thing about billboards were their grammar and stiff formulaic photography. Honestly, they should do something about the contrived, contorted poses of the models on those billboards.

It was also the year when the days-old brownout became a perfect class leveler. Hotels were booked, and the shower facilities of country clubs had long queues as families flocked to the clubs for running water and electric power since their homes had none at all.

That was also the time, a hotel PR executive

WHAT/ D4

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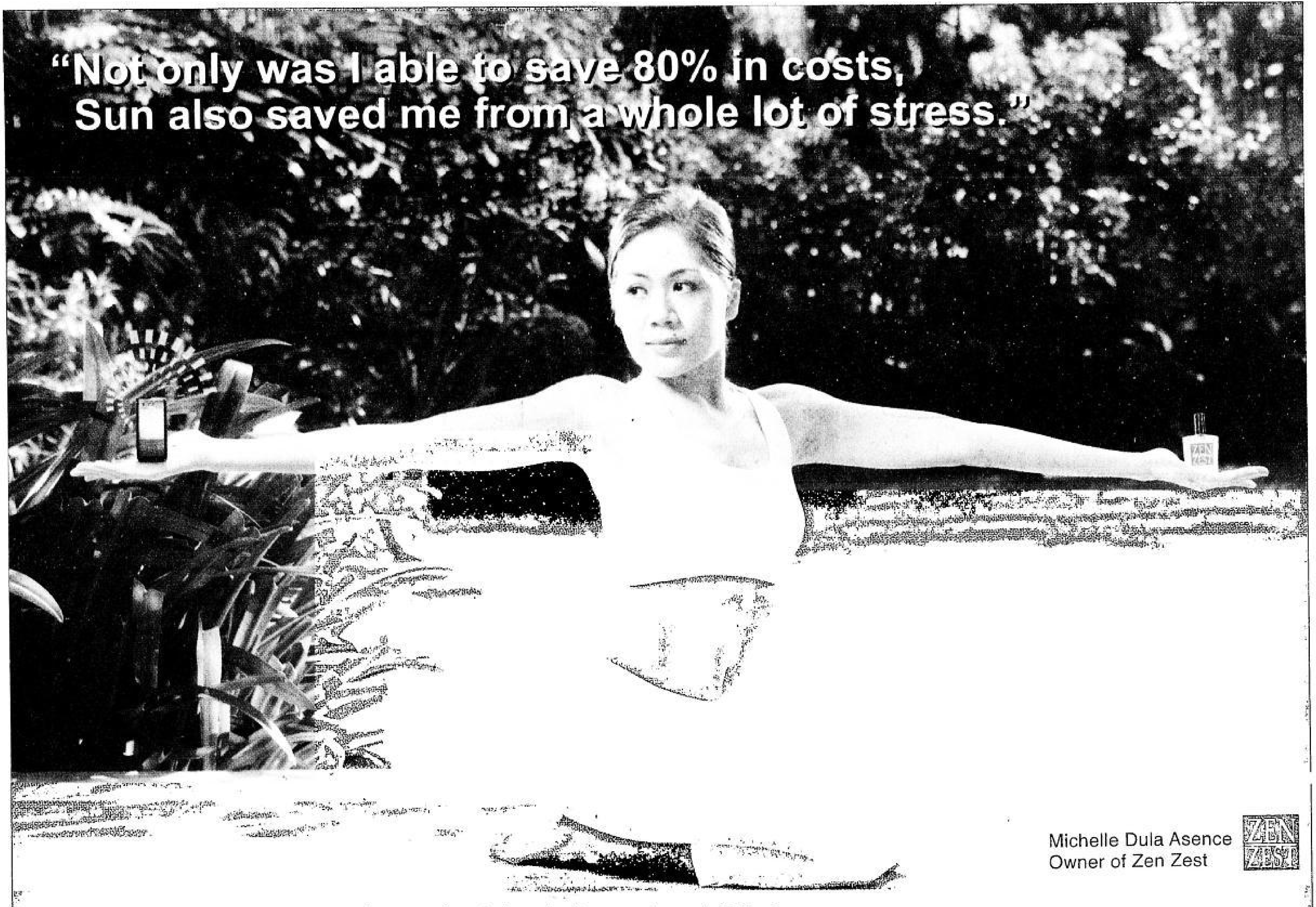
SM LIPA . SM MANILA . SM MEGAMALL . SM NORTH EDSA . SM PAMPANGA . SM SAN LAZARO . SM SOUTHMALL . STA. LUCIA GRAND MALL . V MALL GREENHILLS



"Not only was I able to save 80% in costs,
Sun also saved me from a whole lot of stress."
ZEN ZEST

Michelle Dula Asence
Owner of Zen Zest

Passion has a way of turning into obsession as Michelle Dula Asence, owner of Zen Zest will tell you. Even at an early age, Michelle was fascinated by scents, going as far as making her own scented soaps by hand. Naturally, she turned her obsession into a business. Today, Zen Zest has grown to 41 outlets nationwide, all of which are on Sun.

Keeping track of so many outlets can be a daunting task even for the most meticulous of people. Deliveries, inventories, sales figures and even staff attendance --- Sun simplifies all that. "Before, it was so difficult to get sales figures. Now, no more excuses for my salespeople not to report. Especially since it's 24/7 Unlimited, nawawala ang stress kasi you're not tense sa babayaran mo."

With Sun, everything is simple and economical. Best of all, you finally have your peace of mind. How very Zen.

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Shop makes wishes come true

IZA Calzado

PINK AND BLUE SODA HAS changed into Soda by Pink and Soda Man by Blue.

Soda by Pink and Soda Man by Blue address the upwardly mobile female and male, respectively.

Soda classics have been upgraded while offering fresher cuts and edgier designs for jeans, tops, jackets, camisoles, shirts, pants, undergarments and other items.

The re-branding and re-imaging of Soda are personified by models Bianca Gonzales, Mariel Rodriguez, Borgy Manotoc and Iza Calzado.

Soda has also started refurbishing its outlets, particularly its shop at the SM Southmall in Las Piñas.

The new store design is sophisticated and sleek with a color scheme consisting mainly of off-white and neutral tones.

Soda store's main element is the intersection of hangers made of stainless steel and powder-coated BI pipes placed at the center of the shop as part of its wall modules.

Crazy-cut stonewalls as well as watercolor graphics complete the accented interiors.

Soda's new look is expected to be completed in all of its shops in popular malls in Ortigas, Makati and Quezon City by next year.

For the holidays, Soda has the "Make a Soda-Wish" charity promo.

The special "Loads of Love" T-shirt goes for only P99 for every minimum purchase worth P300 in a single transaction. Proceeds go to the Make-A-Wish Foundation Phils., which aims to fulfill wishes of children between the ages of 3 and 18.

Soda's "Make A Soda-Wish This Holiday" is made possible in cooperation with Shu Uemura, Kiehl's, Puerto del Sol and Wave 89.1. It runs until Feb. 15, 2007.

Shoes and more shoes

SHOES—THE WORD ALONE IS ENOUGH [illegible]

[illegible]

MOTOBUS:
The Nationwide Invasion

Since it hit the roads of Manila, the ingenious MOTOBUS has traveled far and wide across the country. After invading Manila's shoppers' paradise of Greenhills, Tutuban and Baclaran, it headed off down South—from Davao to Cagayan de Oro, from Cebu to Iloilo and Bacolod. Joining festivals such as Kadayawan, Kagay-An and Maskarra, MOTOBUS surely added more color and excitement to these annual celebrations. It then went to Dagupan and is now headed back to Manila!

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MATCHING Cosmic and Heartbreaker watches from Skechers Time

Stepping in time

SKECHERS SHOES HAVE COME OUT with their own line of timepieces, Skechers Time.

Skechers Time watches are affordably priced. The designs are colorful and funky, clean and classic, fun and sporty.

Skechers Time can also match one's outfit—whether smart or street, chic or casual.

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make wishes [illegible]

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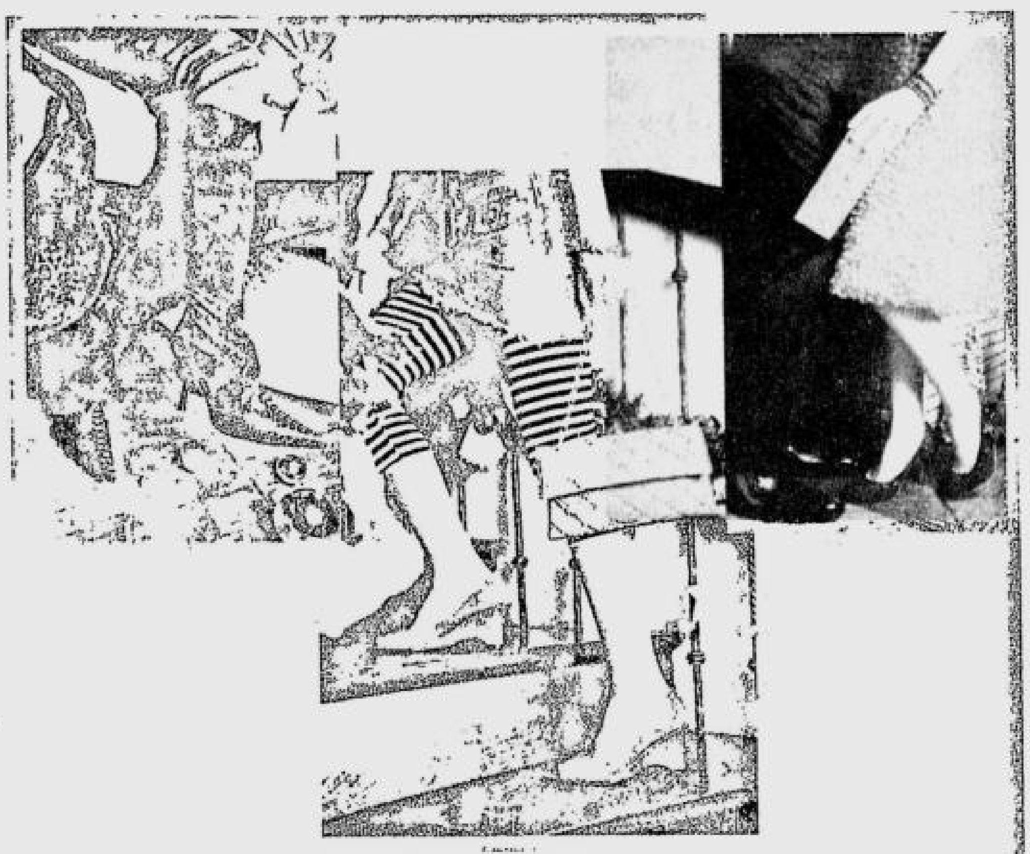

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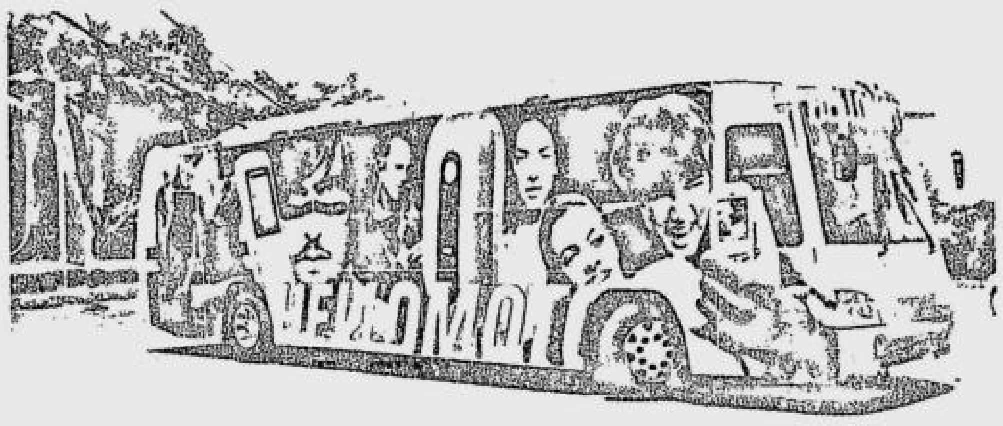

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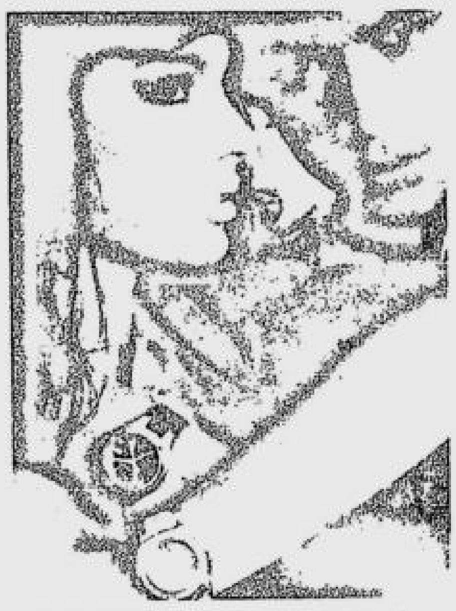
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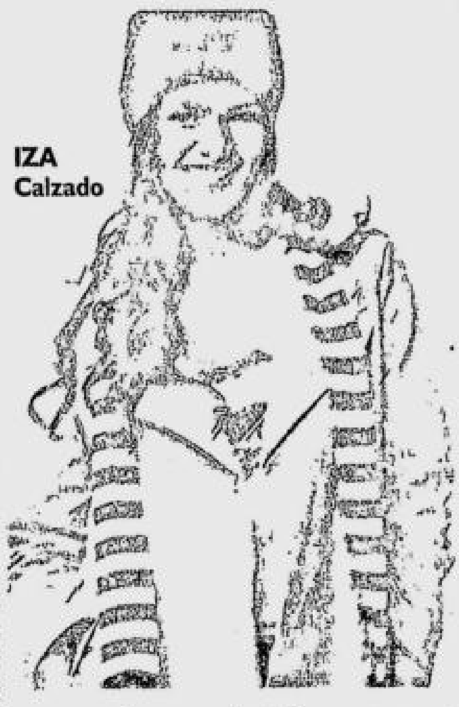
RETAKE OF PRECEDING FRAME

Shop makes wishes come true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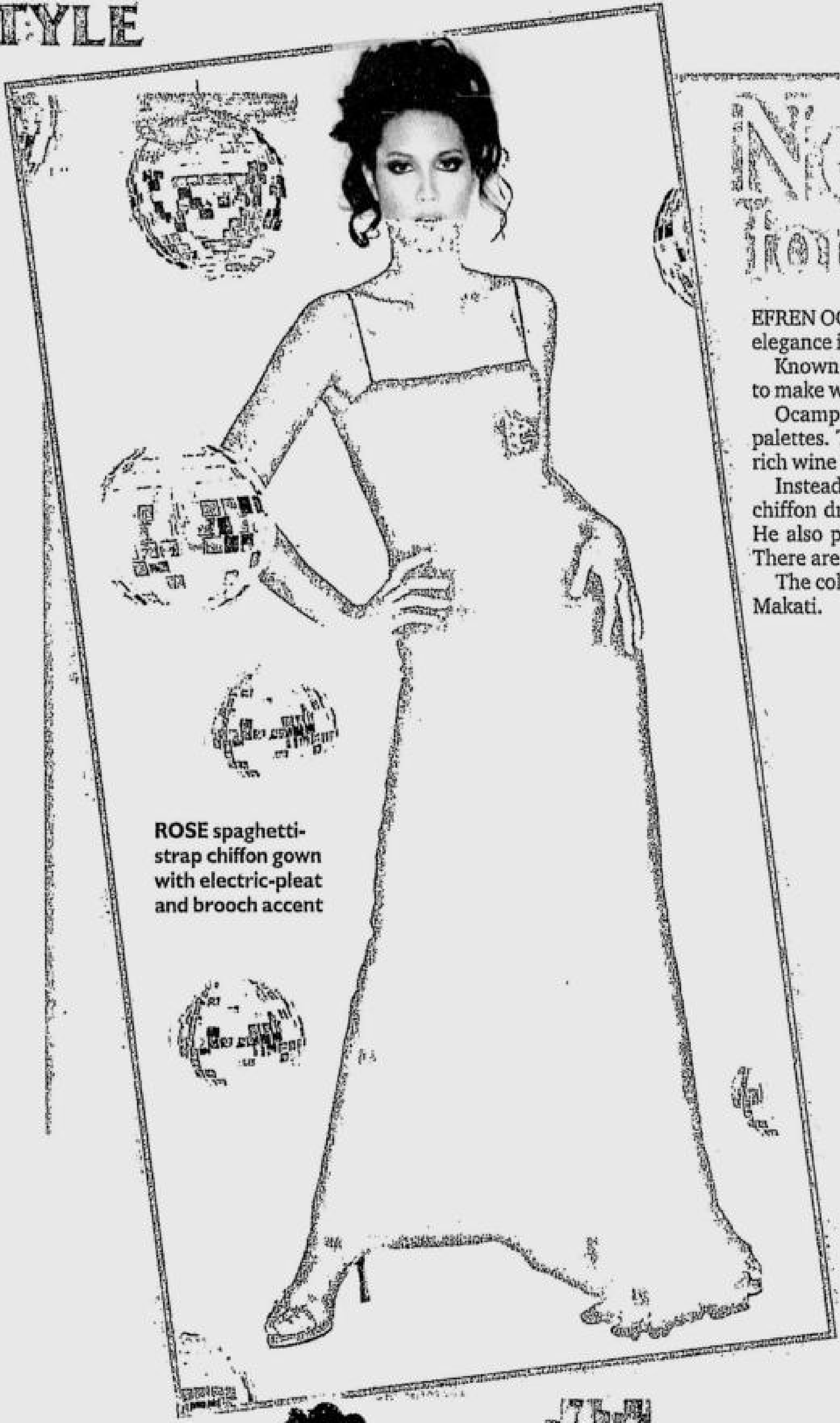

ROSE spaghetti-strap chiffon gown with electric-pleat and brooch accent

New looks for the New Year

EFREN OCAMPO WELCOMES THE NEW YEAR WITH A NEW TAKE ON elegance in his latest collection for the SM Boutique Square.

Known for his evening clothes, Ocampo says he designed the clothes to make women "feel beautiful and feel wonderful partying all night."

Ocampo draws inspiration from more exuberant red and pink palettes. The colors range from pretty rosettes to dazzling corals and rich wine tones (burgundy and Bordeaux).

Instead of the usual beadwork, Ocampo emphasizes softness—in chiffon dresses and gowns with electric pleats, ruching and layering. He also plays with the neckline—sweetheart, one-sided and draped. There are also subtle touches of beadwork.

The collection is available at the Boutique Square Department of SM Makati.

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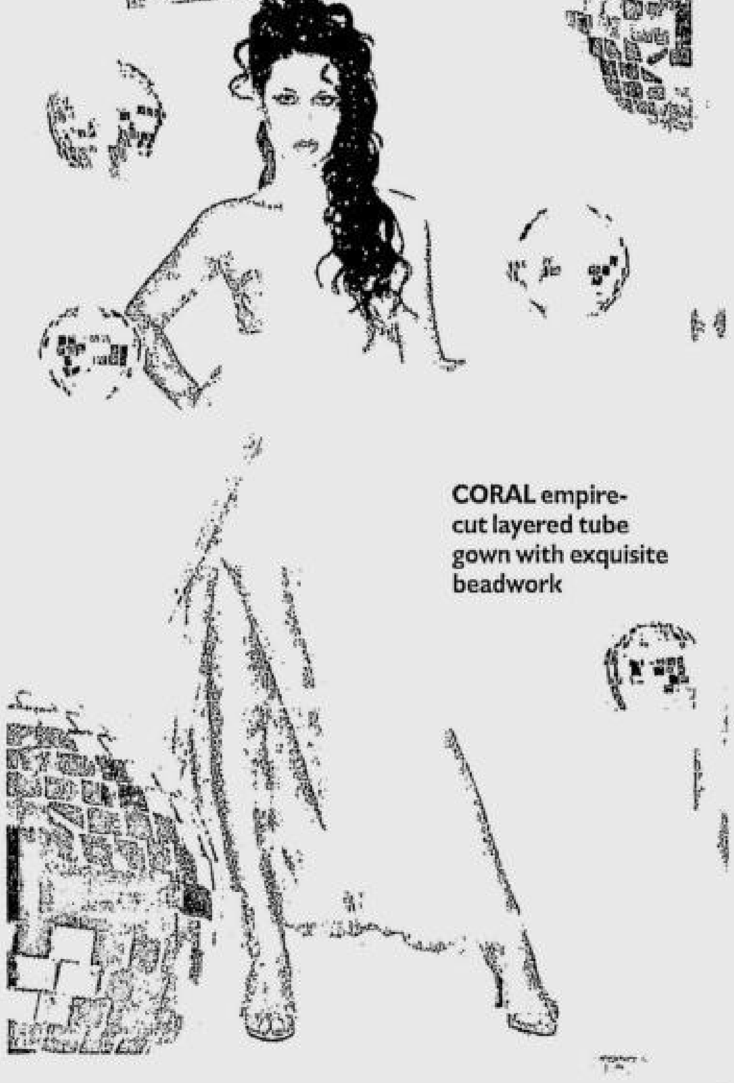
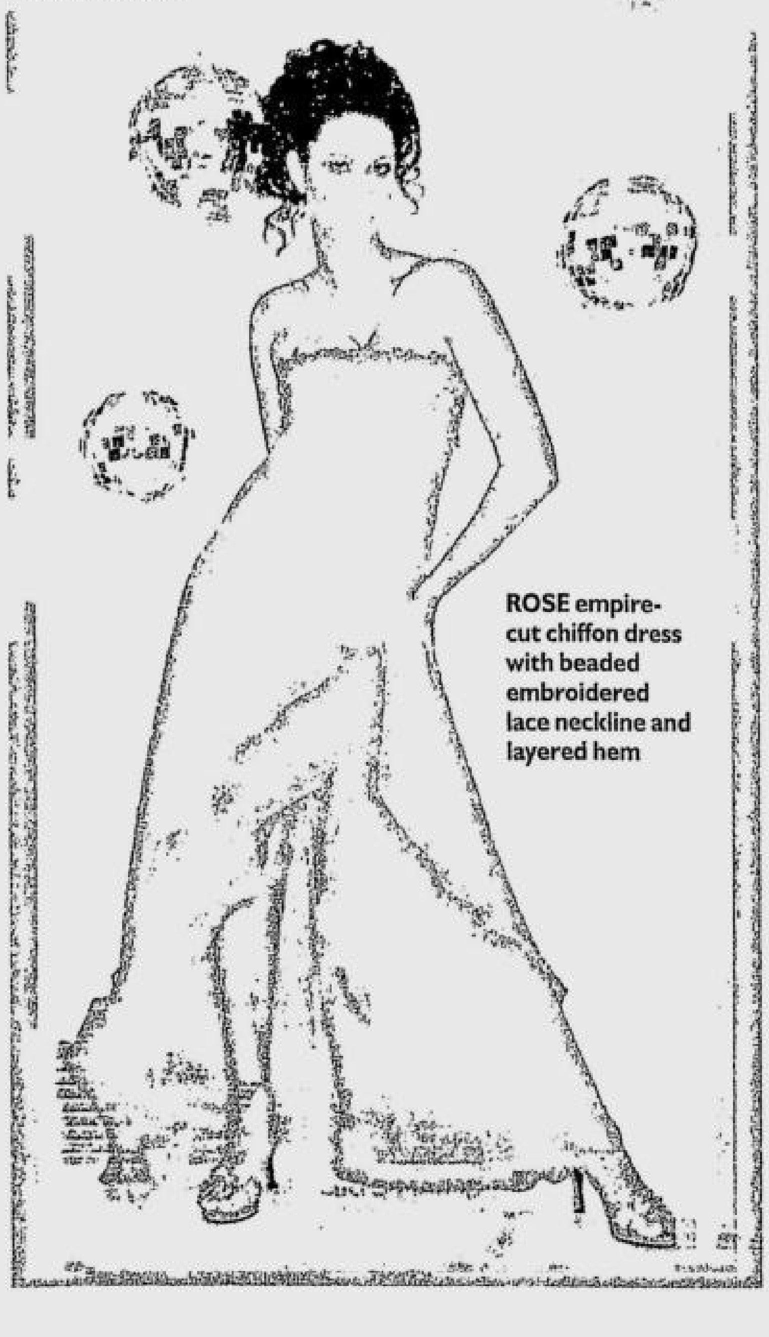


CORAL empire-cut layered tube gown with exquisite beadwork



ROSE empire-cut chiffon dress with beaded embroidered lace neckline and layered hem

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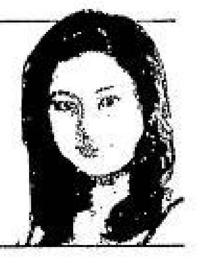
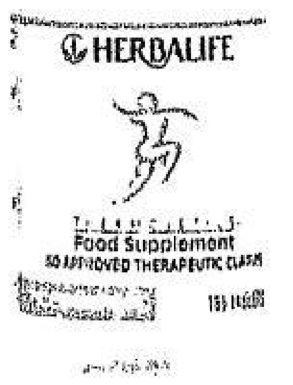


WARNING: AS WITH EVERY SUPplement you're about to take, consult a doctor first before starting this detoxification program. This detox program may affect absorption and effectiveness.

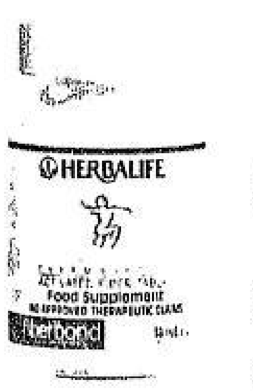
How much weight did you guys gain over Christmas? Surprisingly, by Dec. 25, I was the same weight as the start of November, and I owe it all to one woman's suggestion.

Ana Pascual, Health Express' director of marketing, suggested I start a detox program starting Dec. 16 to keep my weight under control. This was the same woman who made me try the Nature's Secret Five-day Ultimate Fasting Cleanse (P4,500) last Holy Week that gave me the flat stomach, fresh breath, clear skin and expelled a good three feet of toxins and waste matter that had been accumulated in my colon for a good 20 years or so that probably saved me from colon cancer.

I was supposed to do that every three months, but I know attempting to live on water, juice and a whole bunch of supplements on mealtimes for five days over the Christmas season would be torture.



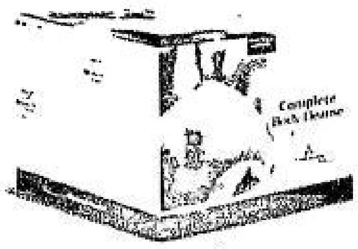
HERBALIFE Fiber and Herb



HERBALIFE Fiberbond

Ana suggested Life-Flo's Complete Body Cleanse Kit (P2,500), a 14-day program with three main functions: Colon Cleanse, Liver Cleanse and removal of toxic heavy metals from the body (Metal Chelation). It's not as thorough as the Five-day Ultimate Fast but it knocks off the excess pounds, toxins, yeast and parasites that prevent maximum vitamin/mineral absorption. The best part is, you can eat!

My last day is supposed to be today (Dec. 29), but during the first nine days of the program, I had lost four pounds plus one more I had gained from the start of December, and I had maintained my weight till after Christmas Day. And that happened without me depriving myself of Christmas goodies and the occasional pig-out buffet.



LIFE-Flo Complete Body Cleanse Kit

There is enough excess for a full supply so I will end mine tomorrow for a full 15 days. Will also continue with the extra-liver and heavy-metal cleansings after the colon cleansing has run out. That's two extra days for the liver and five for the heavy-metal cleansings.

What to expect: 1. You will use the bathroom at least after every mealtime. Daily, there will be movements from two to six. 2. You'll have loose stools but without the cramping pain of diarrhea (it is also controllable so there is no risk of public embarrassment). 3. Your appetite will diminish and you will have no taste or tolerance for fast-food, junk food and ultra-greasy concoctions. 4. You will have more energy. 5. You'll experience less bloating during p.m.; there will be improvement in mood swings and discomfort.

According to Ana, a common mistake people do is to binge during the holidays and just go back to an exercise and diet program when they are all bloated, fat and sluggish after New Year's Day.

Since you have gained a good five to 15 pounds by then, it will be around March when most of us will have fully recovered. That means ill-fitting clothes, low self-esteem and acne until after Valentine's Day.

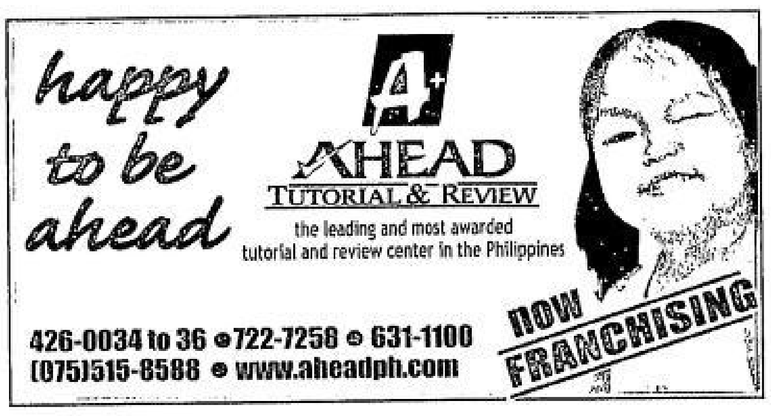
If you had excess weight even before the holidays, that would have turned into stubborn fat by now and will be a struggle to take away. Pounds will just keep piling up for you year after year and, before you know it, you are obese or really close to it.

My 15-day program does not cover New Year's Eve and Day and I know I will be eating during that time. My secret weapon is Herbalife's Fiber and Herb or Fiber Bond (binds excess fat as well) Tablets, which I take two of with each meal for Fiber and Herb or two tablets 30 minutes before a meal for Fiber Bond. This you can actually take on a daily basis, especially if your bathroom habits are not regular.

Ideally, we are supposed to go the bathroom after every meal as the new meal is supposed to push the old one our body did not use or need out. Going once daily is still considered slightly constipated. If you are already taking Psyllium fiber and it is working for you, there is no need to purchase Herbalife's fiber tablets.

There are those like me who have intolerance to plain Psyllium (it stays in my stomach and just keeps absorbing water and refuses to come out). So they end up with three extra inches around the waist and a huge belly. What I do is take a laxative and purge it out the day after. Herbalife's derives its fiber from oat fiber, papaya, fennel, peppermint, etc. so it is good for the Psyllium resistant.

For inquiries about Health Express items, call 8927978 or 8401855 or e-mail customerservice@healthexpressph.com. For Herbalife inquiries, call 8920545. Check www.herbalife.com and click on Philippines in the select-a-country portion.



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What to remember about 2006

From page D1

told us, when she made so many enemies, since she had to turn down requests for room bookings and complimentary rooms.

In 2006, guys and girls, *fashionistas* or non-*fashionistas*, enjoyed "The Devil Wears Prada." It was also this Meryl Streep movie that gave many a Manila editor the illusion that s/he could be Miranda Priestley. Until it's backed by billions of dollars (the worth of the fashion/beauty industry the likes of Anna Wintour holds sway over), it is and will always be an illusion—or dementia.

In the Philippines, 2006 was a landmark year for fashion design. For the first time, a couturier was named National Artist—Ramon Valera. It's the ultimate recognition given Philippine fashion design.

Without fanfare, it was also the year Coco Banana, with Ernest Santiago, made a comeback, albeit for only a night, the night of the "Milenyo" at that. It was Metro Society's ingenious idea to use Coco Banana and the era it represented as the theme of its anniversary party. Apart from the denizens of that hottest watering hole, the hit of the party was the disco sounds not heard in a long time, with the deejay using 45s and LP records no less. Expectedly, so many Coco Banana-wannabe parties followed suit. Copying is in Manila's social genes.

We'll remember '06 for Chef Ed Quimson's Valentine menu at Teak Bistro consisting of heart-shaped chocolate pizza with fresh strawberry and chili flakes. Indeed, can you imagine chocolate and chili—all on a pizza? Ed, I'd daresay, is the Lagerfeld of Pinoy cuisine—his creative mind knows no bounds, he can do anything. Not known to many, Teak Bistro has all the comfort-gourmet food (such a combination is possible) you'll want. Ours is the *tinapa/chicharon* pizza. Check its menu out.

Ed has joined Katrina Enrile's Jaka Food to produce Delimondo—a canned deli line of gourmet sausages, pasta sauces and salad dressing. Delimondo's corned beef is to die for.

As '06 ended, Joey Panlilio did something we never saw anyone do before: he hosted an intimate sit-down dinner for close kin and friends to bid his house—you read right, his house—goodbye. The house is a '50s work by Juan Nakpil in an increasingly commercial part of Quezon City.

Over dinner, we asked our fashion friends their list:

Jackie Aquino: "2006 gave me the idea that we can really grow as a people if we had one common goal. I am hopeful that 2007 will be the year we start to act as a people."

Randy Ortiz: "It was extra good for me. I acquired my dream house. Looking forward to 2007, to our lifestyle store in Greenbelt 5 and hopefully to a more exciting love life."

Vic Barba: "2006 was a return to family values. I look forward to getting married, have at least four children and molding them into beautiful people like their father and me!"

Efren Ocampo: "I'll remember '06 for Balenciaga collection of Nicholas Ghesquiere, the direction, referring to the past but modern, sleek, polished. We're looking forward to more polished, sleek, modern collections, to whatever references to the past or present."

Dennis Lustico: "It's finally achieving a balance between home and career, playing with my kids Rafa, Miguel and Yoi-chi, having a car, working with Bench and launching LX2 in Essenses."

Tippi Ocampo: "2006 was a year of tremendous growth opportunities and learning experiences, like being one of the designers at the "Fashionable Asia" show in Doha, Qatar, for the 15th Asian Games. I'm looking forward to continued learning and growth and starting a family!"

JC Buendia: "2006 was the year of realizations, that love and career could be balanced and cherished. My wish for 2007 is to be able to share my blessings with more people."

Hmm, it seems like designers have some love life going on. But please take note that we had alcohol—tremendous amount of it—at that dinner.

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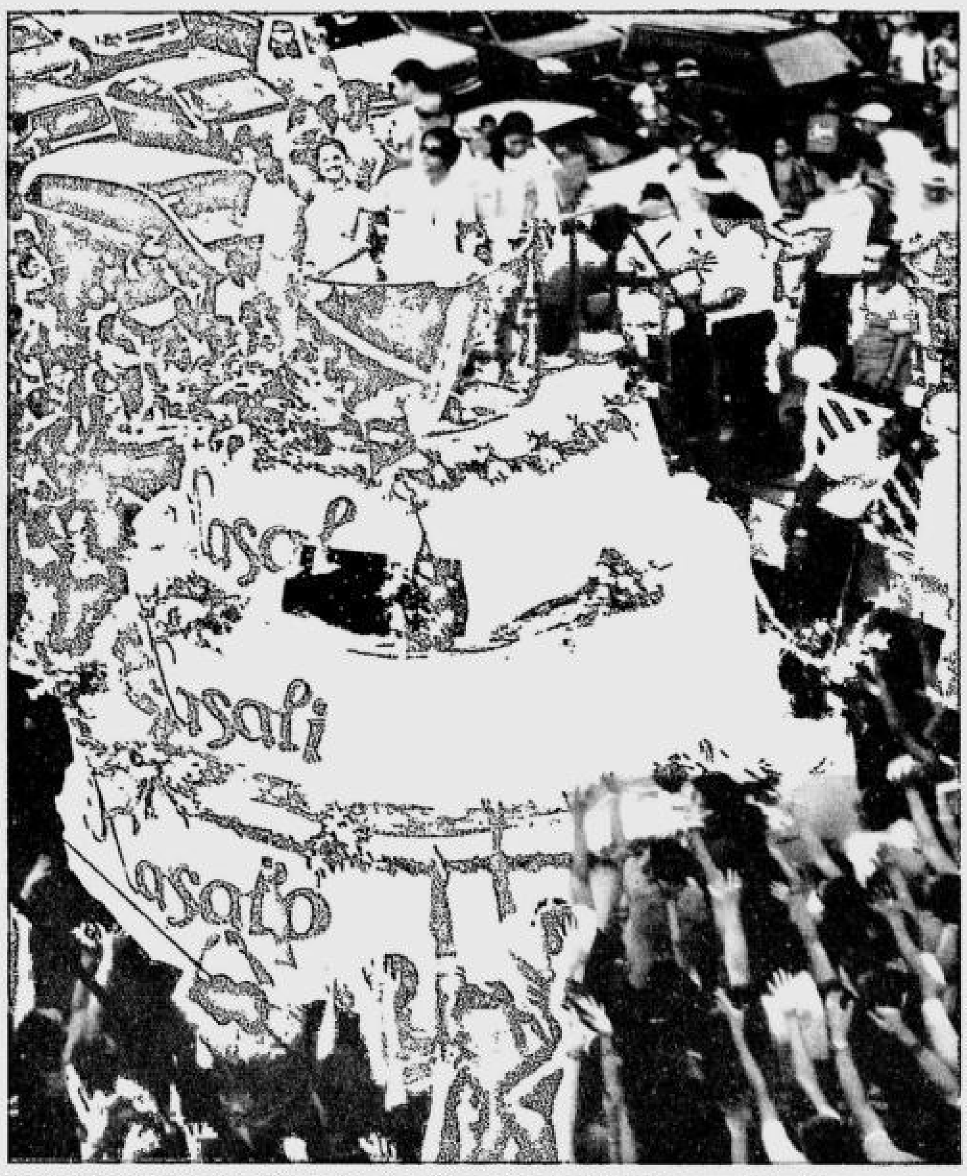
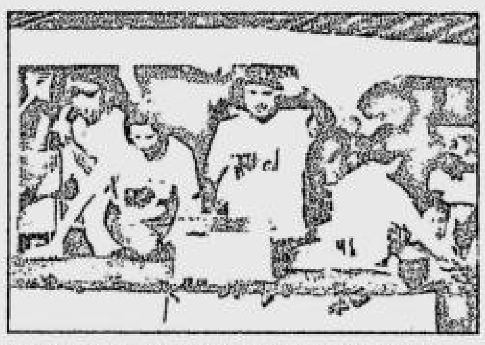
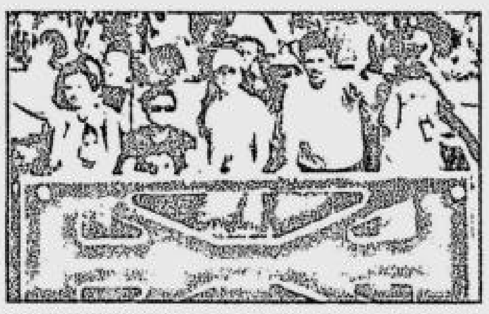


PHOTOS BY RAFFY LERMA

SPRUCED up like a wedding cake, the "Kasal" float elicited cheers during the parade. The movie has earned raves from critics and an "A" from the Cinema Evaluation Board.



"LIGALIG," directed by Cesar Montano (center), is described as a "different kind of thriller."



BOX-OFFICE topnotcher "Enteng Kabisote 3," starring Kristine Hermosa and Vic Sotto (third and second from right), is lauded for its special effects.

Film fest hits and misses

Some fearless forecasts

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

INQUIRER ENTERTAINMENT asked five industry insiders, plus a past winner, their picks for the top awards in this year's Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

Digna Santiago, an MMFF screening committee member, chose the three entries graded A by the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB)—Jose Javier Reyes' "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," Joel Lamangan's "Zsazsa Zaturnnah Ze Moveeh" and Cesar Montano's "Ligalig."

Santiago's bets for best performers are Rustom Padilla of "Zsazsa" (Actor), Judy Ann Santos of "Kasal" (Actress), Gina Pareño of "Kasal" (Supporting Actress) and Chokoleit of "Zsazsa" or Johnny Delgado/John Regala of "Ligalig" (Supporting Actor).

She named Nash Aguas, child performer in the "Yaya" episode of "Shake, Rattle & Roll 8," as leader in his category.

For Best Story, Santiago picked "Zsazsa"; Screenplay, "Kasal"; Music, "Zsazsa"; and Special Effects, "Enteng Kabisote 3."

"This year's batch is better than previous years'. I just wish more time was spent on post-production," she commented.

Rolando "Jacky" Atienza, head of the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), similarly praised the three "A" films, saying, "'Kasal' is well-produced; 'Zsazsa' is a unique musical; 'Ligalig' is a different kind of thriller."

For best performers, he picked Padilla, Santos, Pareño and Delgado as standouts in their categories.

Positive development

A positive development in this year's festival, Atienza pointed out, was the inclusion of young directors who, he believed, would "give local movies a new look."

The FDCP is handing out the Prize for Artistic Achievement, which comes with a P500,000 cash reward. To be chosen by the jury, the winner will be announced tonight at the awards ceremony in Aliw Theater.

Ric Camaligan, MMFF executive committee member, said he was torn between the two romantic-comedies "Kasal" and "Mano Po 5: Gua Ai Di." The lead stars of the two movies (Santos and Ryan Agoncillo of "Kasal" and Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez of "Mano Po 5") are also his choices for top performers. Aguas is his favorite among the child performers.

For Best Director, he noted a three-cornered fight among Reyes ("Kasal"), Lamangan ("Mano Po 5") and Montano ("Ligalig").

Camaligan said this year's first-day total grosses of P30.3 million indicated a 17 percent increase from last year's earnings of P26 million.

Product placements

At press time, the early box-office leaders are "Enteng" (almost P20 million) and "Kasal" (almost P15 million).

CEB member Tommy Abuel's top picks are "Kasal"; Santos of "Kasal" and Padilla of "Zsazsa" for lead actors; Pareño of "Kasal" and Chokoleit of "Zsazsa" for supporting players.

Filmmaker Elwood Perez—Best Director and Best Picture winner in 1991 for "Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M."—predicted a sweep for "Kasal," with Reyes and Montano slugging it out for Best Director.

June Keithley, a member of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, singled out "Kasal" as Best Picture.

Best Director, for her, is a toss-up between Montano and Quark Henares of "Super Noypi."

For Best Actor, she picked Padilla for his "non-stereotypical, sensitive" portrayal of a gay man. For Best Actress, she lauded Santos for "a truthful performance, which avoided the tricks of the TV trade."

Keithley also raved over Pareño's "gem of a performance" in "Kasal" and commended the seamless script of "Kasal."

However, she bemoaned the "not-so-subtle product placements" in some entries. "I was scandalized," she said. "I realize how difficult it is to produce movies nowadays, but they shouldn't insult viewers that way."

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3	241 My Favorite Song	Rivermaya	241
4	Beer	Itchyworms	beer
5	Taralets	Imago	taralets
6	Sabihin Mo Na	Top Suzara	sabihinmona
7	Back To Me	Cueshe	backtome
8	Papa Cologne	Parokya Ni Edgar	papacologne
9	Nobela	Join The Club	nobela
10	Jeepney	Kala	jeepneykala
11	Hey Look At The Sun	Sitti	heylookatdsun
12	Mas Que Nada	Sitti	masquenada
13	Don't Cha	Pussycat Dolls	dontcha
14	Buttons	Pussycat Dolls	buttons
15	Doo Bi Doo	Kamikazee	doobidoo

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2	Breaking Free	Nikki Gil	EA622
3	241 My Favorite Song	Rivermaya	IA760
4	First Of Summer	Urbandub	EA520
5	Tulog Na	Sugarfree	EA441
6	Beer	Itchyworms	IB004
7	Sugod	Sandwich	EA519
8	Taralets	Imago	IB008
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Pops Fernandez Rustom Padilla
Zsa Zsa Padilla
ZSAZSA ZATURNNAH
ZE MOVEEH

ZSAZSA ZATURNNAH
ZE MOVEEH

Ada (Rustom Padilla) a soft-spoken prim gay man who runs a parlor business, surprisingly received a mysterious stone from above with the word "Zaturnnah" engraved on it. Ada attempts to gulp it down and suddenly magically transformed into Zsa Zsa Zaturnnah (Zsa Zsa Padilla), a superhero with fierce beauty, immense strength and striking hair color! Zsa Zsa Zaturnnah is out to save everyone from the evil Queen Femina (Pops Fernandez) who wants to invade their town.

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6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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9 MANO PO 5
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11 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
12 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

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8 LIGALIG
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Promo Period: December 25, 2006 to January 7, 2007

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2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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7 MANO PO 5
8 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MANO PO 5

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CIY LIPA! (043) 756-7925
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 TATLONG BARAHA

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 LIGALIG
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 KASAI, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 TATLONG BARAHA
3 LIGALIG
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 SUPER NOYPI

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341265-66
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 MANO PO 5
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 TATLONG BARAHA
6 ZSA ZSA-ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 SUPER NOYPI

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 MANO PO 5
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3

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GALLERIA 632-9116
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 • THX
11:50 2:15 4:40 7:05
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7.45 10:00
3 LIGALIG
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
7 MANO PO 5
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
8 SUPER NOYPI
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
9 TATLONG BARAHA
1:20 3.30 5:40 7:50
10 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
10:10 12:35 3:00 5:25 7:45 10:00
2 LIGALIG
10:20 12:25 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
10.20 12:25 2.50 5.05 7:25 10:00
4 TATLONG BARAHA
10:20 12:25 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
10:30 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8 05 10:00
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7.30 10:00
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193, 682-8199
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
11:25 1:55 4:25 6.55 9.20
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
4 TATLONG BARAHA
12:20 2:30 4:40 6:50 9:00
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
6 MANO PO 5
10:20 1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00
7 LIGALIG
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
10:40 1:20 4:00 6:40 9:10

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2576
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH

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Per DTI-NCR Permit #5517, Series of 2006

STA ROSA (049) 837-0907
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5970
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 MANO PO 5

DASMARINAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-1332
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 MANO PO 5

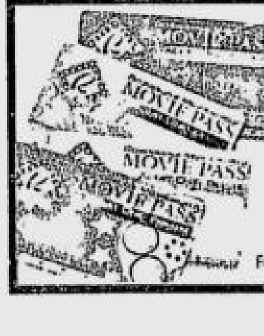
ANGELES (045) 892-2348
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 TATLONG BARAHA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

STARMILLS (045) 875-1827 (045) 961-6270
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0456
1 MANO PO 5
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 THE NATIVITY STORY
6 SUPER NOYPI

ILOILO (033) 336-8070
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURRNAH
2 TATLONG BARAHA
3 MANO PO 5
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8



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Daniel Craig

"There are worse things to be," Da ic new James Bond said, laughing,

---

'Enteng' still leads on 3rd day

By Nini Valera

"ENTENG KABISOTE 3" continued to rule at the box-office on Wednesday, third day of the Metro Manila Film Festival's nationwide run.

The movie starring Vic Sotto and Kristine Hermosa, is trailed by "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" from Star Cinema, which had not fielded a film fest entry since "Dekada '70" in 2002.

"Shake, Rattle and Roll 8," the horror trilogy that has been a lucrative franchise since the 1980s, is in third place.

Unofficial

This ranking is based on unofficial results obtained from the booking office of SM Cinemas by INQUIRER Entertainment on Wednesday.

To accommodate more viewers for the top three entries, SM has began switching cinemas, screening bestsellers in the larger theaters and the under-performing movies in the smaller venues, according to Ric Camaligan, MMFF executive committee member.

"Tatlong Baraha," Sen. Lito Lapid's rehash of his 1970s spaghetti Westerns, is in the last slot, following Cesar Montano's "Ligalig."

These two movies have been moved to smaller theaters in most malls.

Early versions

Official figures of gross takes on Wednesday have yet to be released by the MMFF committee.

Two versions of the rankings began to circulate as early as Tuesday, a day after the movies opened in over 500 theaters nationwide.

One tally placed "Matakot Ka Sa Karma" in fourth place, but a second score card placed the movie in fifth.

SM bookers say the battle for fourth place is a toss-up among "Mano Po 5," the Tsinoy comedy on inter-racial marriages, "ZsaZsa Zaturnah," the comic heroine come to life in ZsaZsa Padilla, "Super Noypi," another fantasy flick targeting the season's main audience of children and "Karma," another horror trilogy.

Fluid situation

At 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Manny Nuqui, president of the Philippine Motion Pictures Producers Association, announced the top five as follows: "Enteng," "Kasal," "Shake," "Super Noypi" and "Karma.

Camaligan's assessment, also on Wednesday, placed "Mano Po," "Zaturnnah," "Ligalig" and "Tatlong Baraha" in sixth to ninth places, respectively.

The SM bookers noted that the announcement of winners in tonight's awards rites could still change this trend.

Adam Sandler's Christmas kids

CHEER FACTOR

CONCORD, NEW HAMPshire—Adam Sandler, a New Hampshire native, helped brighten Christmas for a sister and brother who are struggling with cancer.

The 40-year-old actor sent a Sony Corp. PlayStation 3 loaded with games to 15-year-old Stephanie and 18-year-old Kevin Hudon of Manchester. Sandler also sent signed DVDs, jerseys and an autographed "Longest Yard" poster.

Stephanie has bone cancer that recently spread to her lungs. She is scheduled for surgery Jan. 8. Kevin was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in November and is undergoing chemotherapy.

Christine Monahan, a teacher at Manchester Memorial High School, said the package from Sandler arrived last week. *AP*

fascinating interviews of 2006

From page E4

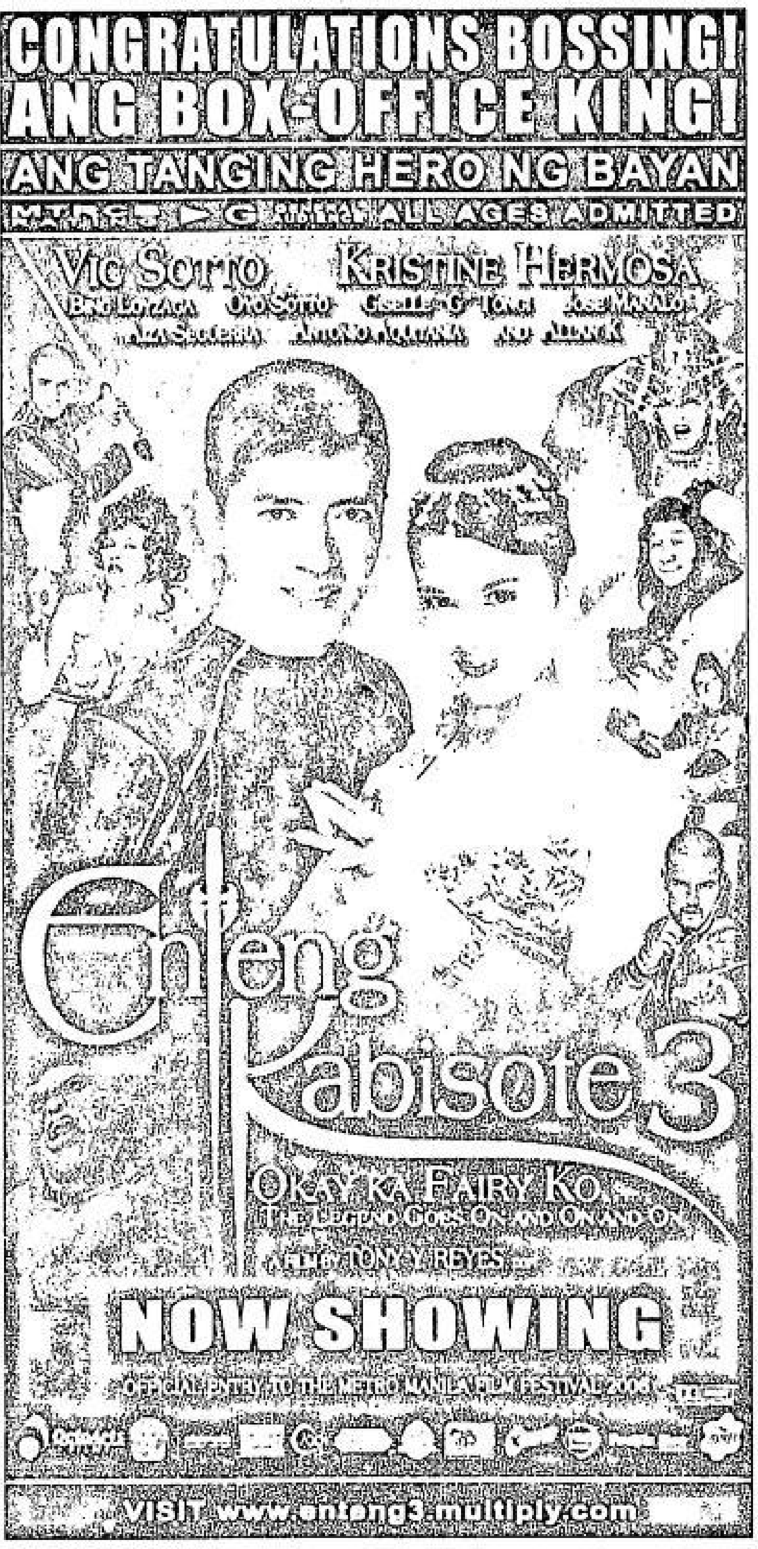
iel, the terrif-
bout being a

sex object. Daniel defied some naysayers who thought he looked too old and not suave-looking enough to be a worthy successor to Pierce Brosnan. "Casino Royale" is now officially the biggest moneymaker in the franchise's long history.

"I don't know what sexy is. If you go out and play sexy, then that immediately becomes not sexy. I didn't set out to do anything. The fact is, I had to get in shape. I had a great trainer. We did a lot of work. And then it came down to looking at the bathing costumes to wear. I just thought he (Bond) can't wear Bermuda shorts. I'll look stupid so we went and found this great pair of trunks. I went, those will do. They may be a little tighter than they should be but it's a Bond movie."

(*More on Sunday*)

E-mail the columnist at rvnepales_5585@yahoo.com.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VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
BING LOYZAGA OYO SOTTO GISELLE "G" TONGI JOSE MANALO
AIZA SEGUERRA ANTONIO AQUITANIA AND [illegible]
ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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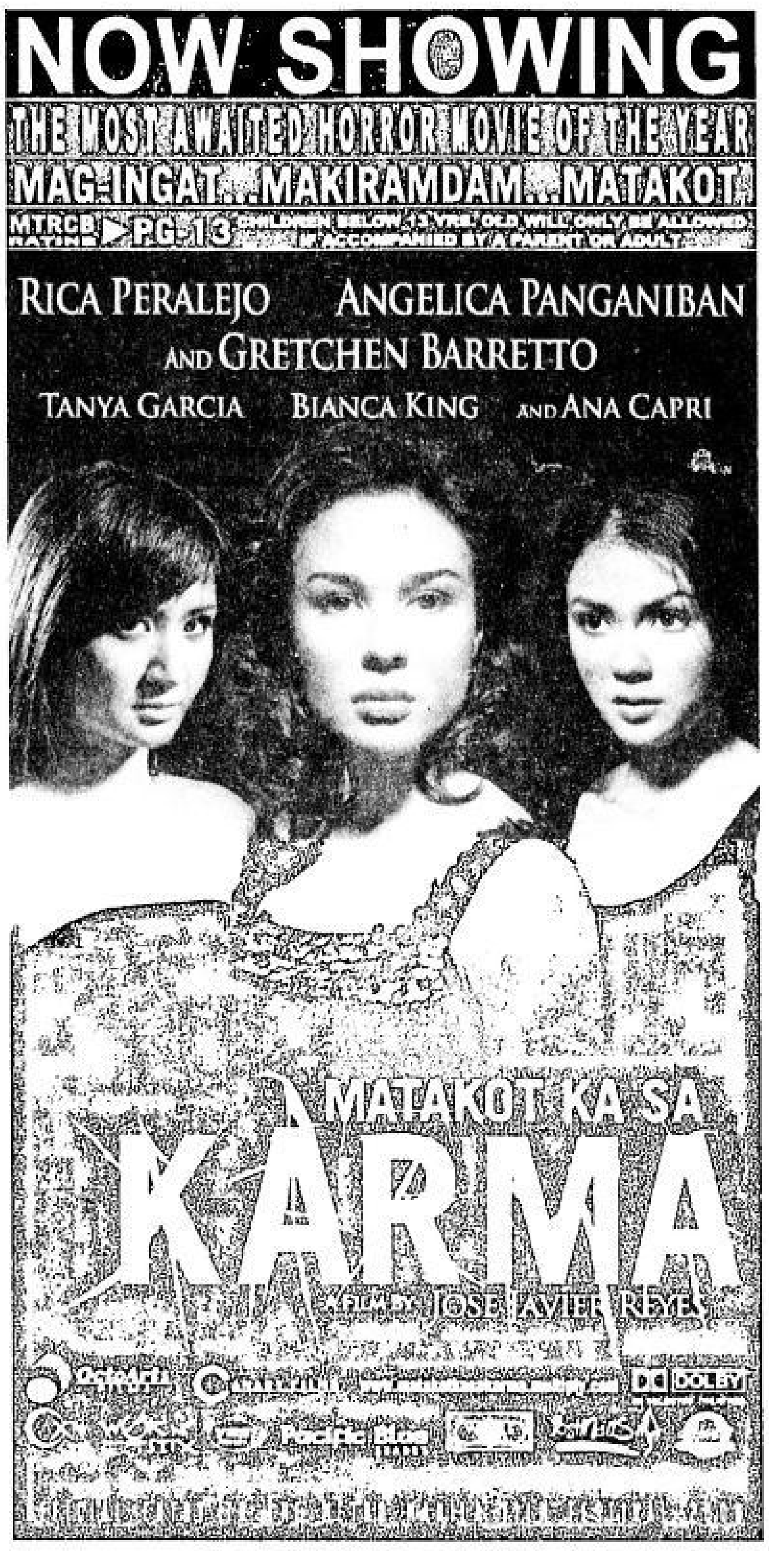
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RICA PERALEJO ANGELICA PANGANIBAN
AND GRETCHEN BARRETTO
TANYA GARCIA BIANCA KING AND ANA CAPRI
MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
A FILM BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
DOLBY

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	4 LIGALIG
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	2 LIGALIG	3 THX TATLONG BARAHA GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA	5 MANO PO 5	6 SUPER NOYPI	7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX SUPER NOYPI GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX MANO PO 5 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA GUARANTEED SEATS	4 TATLONG BARAHA GUARANTEED SEATS	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MATAKOT KA SA KARMA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 MANO PO 5		
	3 SUPER NOYPI	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 SUPER NOYPI	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3	4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3		
	3 SUPER NOYPI	4 MANO PO 5	5 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH	

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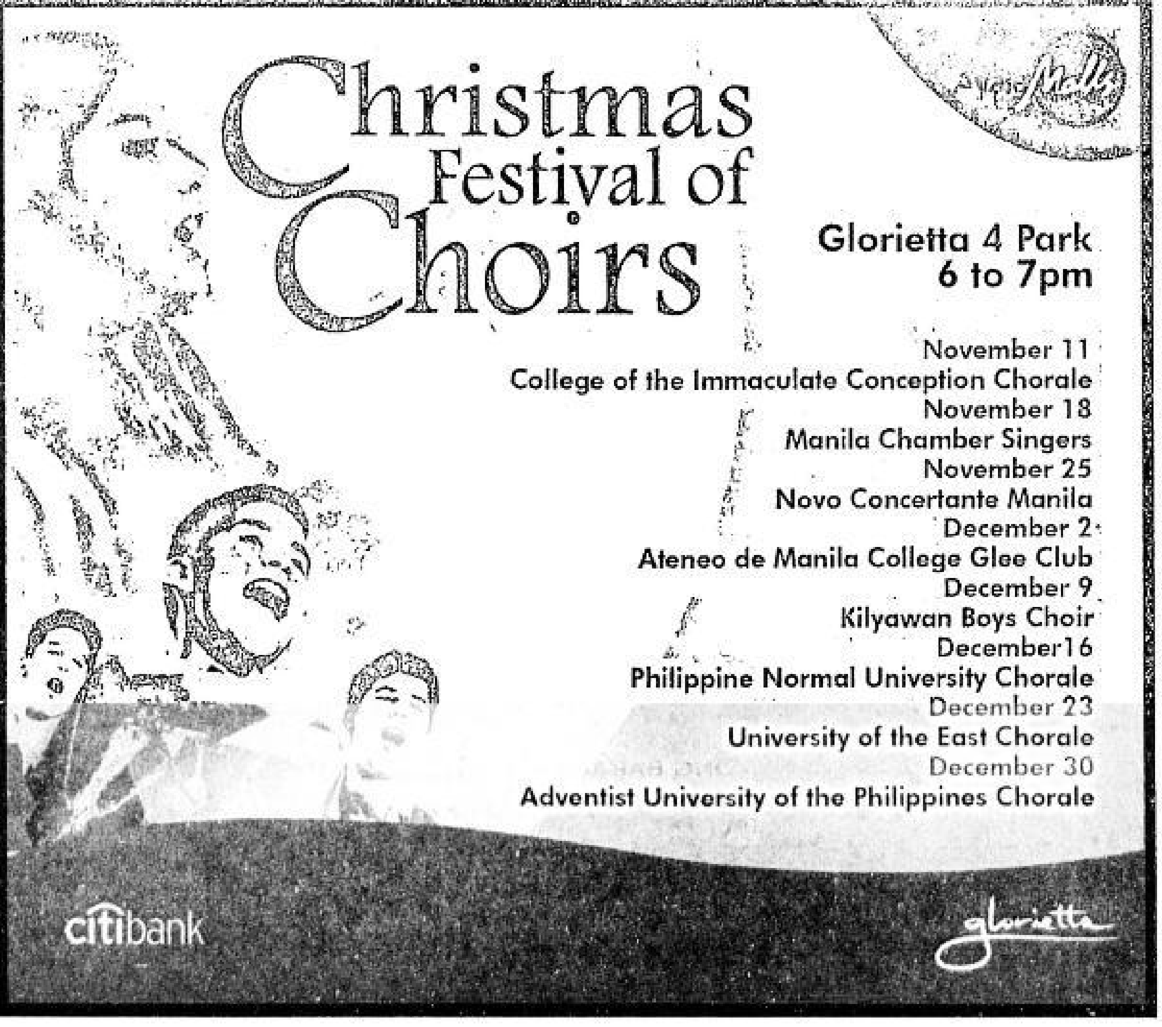

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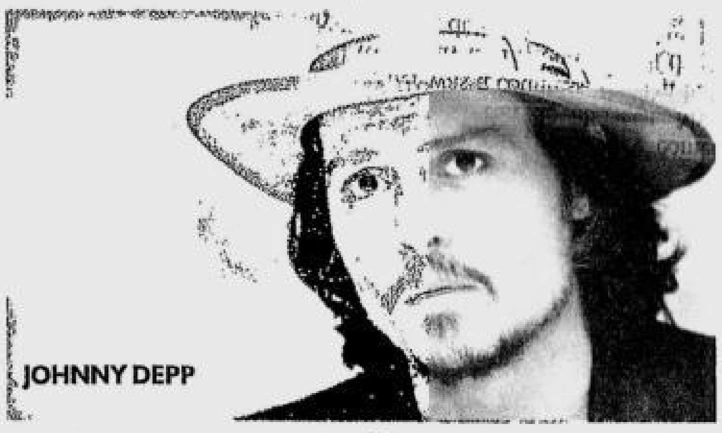
SACHA BARON COHEN



JOHNNY DEPP

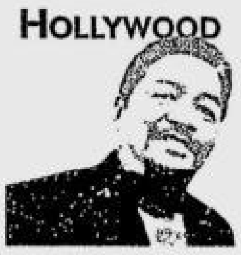
HELEN MIRREN

DANIEL CRAIG

Our most fascinating interviews of 2006

Who said, 'If anyone of you know Pamela Anderson, tell her to leave me alone'?

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD



Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—AN ACTRESS WHO HAD US thinking, "What the…?" leads our list of the most fascinating interviewees this year.

As we wrote when we first came up with this list in 2004,."The folks listed here simply stood out for various reasons, not always because they were loquacious or famous. They are listed randomly, that is, not in any order of importance."

Back to our Hollywood actress who shall remain anonymous. At the beginning of our press con with her, she spread a stack of index cards on the table in front of her. She announced that she wrote quotations, mainly those of a well-loved woman in American history, on the cards which she said may be relevant to her replies. And so in some of her answers to the journalists' questions, the actress paused midway and searched for a "relevant" quote from her "idol."

The trouble was, sometimes it took her a long time to look for that "appropriate" quote from the mass of index cards scattered in front of her. As she frantically searched for that index card, the journalists, who sat in stunned silence (and also out of politeness), could hear her mutter, "Shit."

Our interviewee's bewildering behavior was enough to send a colleague home after that press con (there were more interviews following that one). He said he had enough of Hollywood diva behavior for the day. We all wondered—was the actress going loca?

Here's the rest of our fascinating interviewees. A memorable quote or two follow our brief recall of each celebrity. Sorry, there was no actor walkout this year to spice things up (somebody stormed out last year).

Borat (aka Sacha Baron Cohen)

Our interview with Sacha Baron Cohen, who came in character as Borat (mangled English and all), was hands-down the most amusing and entertaining we've had in recent years. It was like going to a free Borat stand-up comedy show.

On whether he was surprised at how Pamela Anderson reacted when he tried to put that "traditional" Kazakh wedding sack over her: "I was a little surprised because normally I am quicker and I can expect the woman not to run so quick. But this woman Pamela, she have start to stalk me. This week she have sent love messages to me through her lawyer, saying sexy things like, I must not get closer than 30 miles from her house, I must not mail her my dirty underpants, or say ever that I would like to make sexy time with her. If anyone of you know Pamela, tell her to leave me alone. I have a new wife."

Johnny Depp

The "Pirates of the Caribbean" star was an hour late for our press con. If it were another star, there would have been angry mumbling or even threats of a walkout from the reporters. But when Johnny showed up in his trademark fedora a full hour after our scheduled slot with him, all was quickly forgiven. This cool cat is unfailingly courteous, funny, modest and candid.

On kissing Keira Knightley for the first time in "Pirates": "It is always awkward when you are kissing someone you are not romantically involved with. It is acting and it is fake. Kissing scenes are always strange to me, especially since Keira is twentysomething years younger. But she was a good sport. We did what we had to do … and moved on to the next thing. You can almost compare kissing scenes to stunts. It is a strange moment before and after. And then it is just done."

Helen Mirren

She is the Best Actress forerunner in this awards season for portraying Britain's reigning monarch in "The Queen." In person, especially as she appeared before us one afternoon, Helen is not the first actress we would think of to portray Her Highness. But with the help of a wig, frumpy costumes and her renowned acting talents, Helen is Queen Elizabeth on screen, down to the way she clutches her purse on certain occasions.

Helen answered with typical wry Brit humor when asked if she had royal blood: "I have noble Russian ancestry. It (nobility) just comes out. There's nothing I can do about it. My great grandmother was a countess. No, I'm half-Russian. I would say it's my bottom half that's Russian. Because it definitely looks Russian. I'm also half-English working-class so I hope that's also present in my personality. I'm not a great believer in class or aristocracy. I believe in nobility of

OUR MOST, E2

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CAVITE
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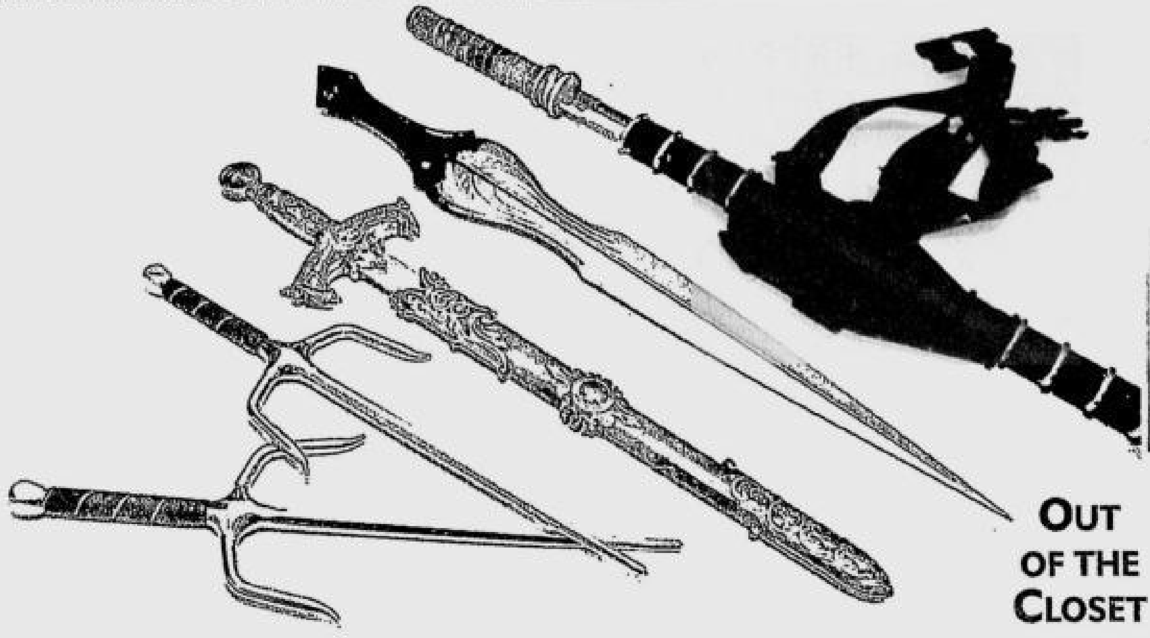
Natasha
Weeknights after ATLANTIKA
Saturdays after WISH KO LANG
Sundays after ANG MAHIWAGANG BAUL
GMA

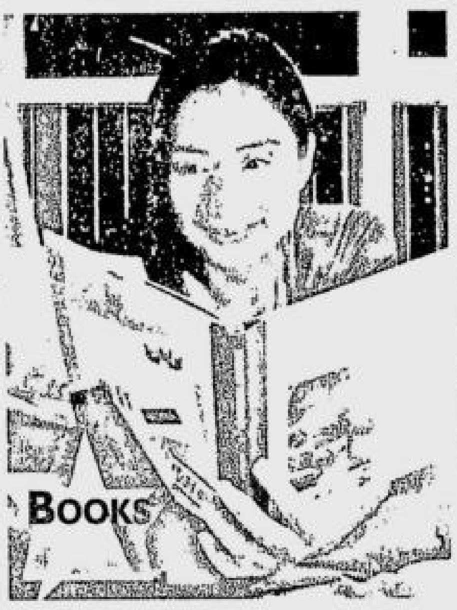
Editor Emmie G. Velarde

LIVING stars



OUT OF THE CLOSET

INQUIRER Entertainment stepped into a movie star's closet and found swords and daggers—plus books on Dragonology and a Louis Vuitton suitcase. Who is this atypical celeb? Page F/3.

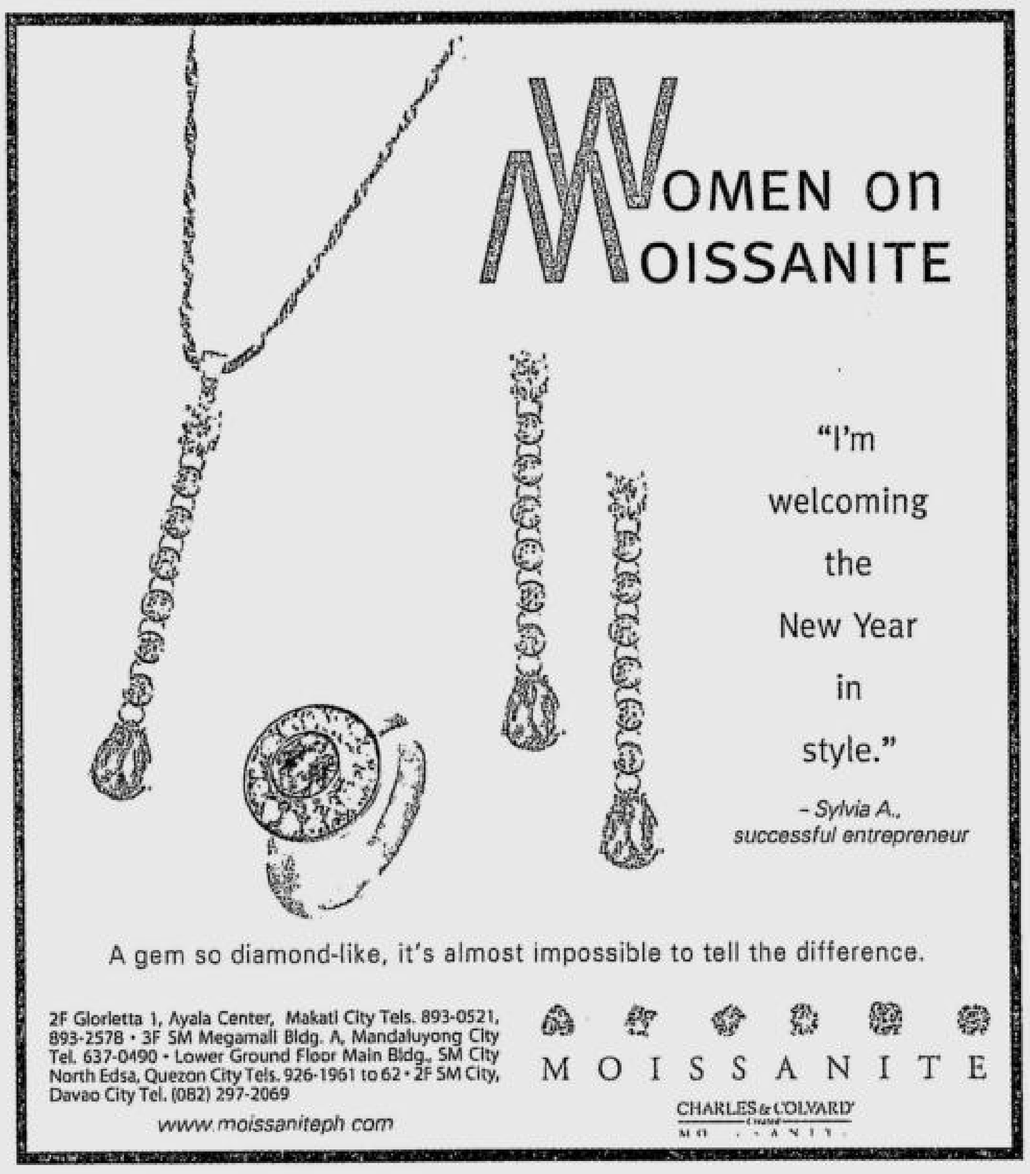


BOOKS

PHOEMELA BARANDA

I love the book series "Griffin & Sabine" by Nick Bantock. Composed of letters, it's short and entertaining. It also boasts a beautiful design. In fact, it caught my attention at the bookstore primarily because of its colorful cover and packaging. You can actually pull out the letters in the book. I am also reading a novel titled "Indecision" by Benjamin Kunkel. Since it's written by someone young, it's funny and snappy. I juggle the two books on my spare time.

Bayani San Diego Jr.
PHOTO BY OSCAR CHRISTOPHER SANTIAGO



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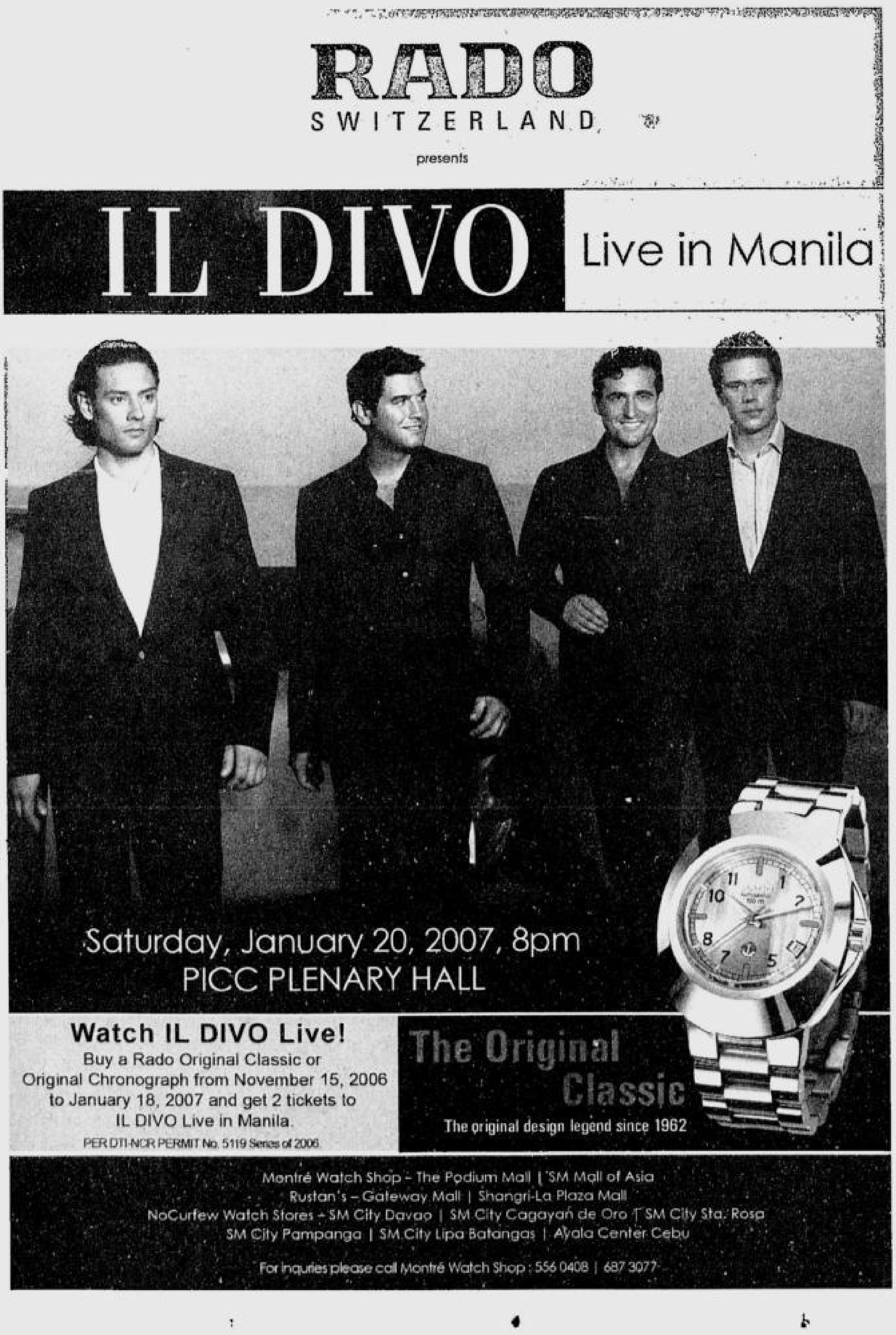

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KASAL, KASALI, KASALO **PG13** 1:40,3:50,6:00, 8:10,10:20	**SHAKE RATTLLE & ROLL 8** **PG13** 2:20,5:00,7:40,10:20	**MANO PO 5: GUA AI DI** **G** 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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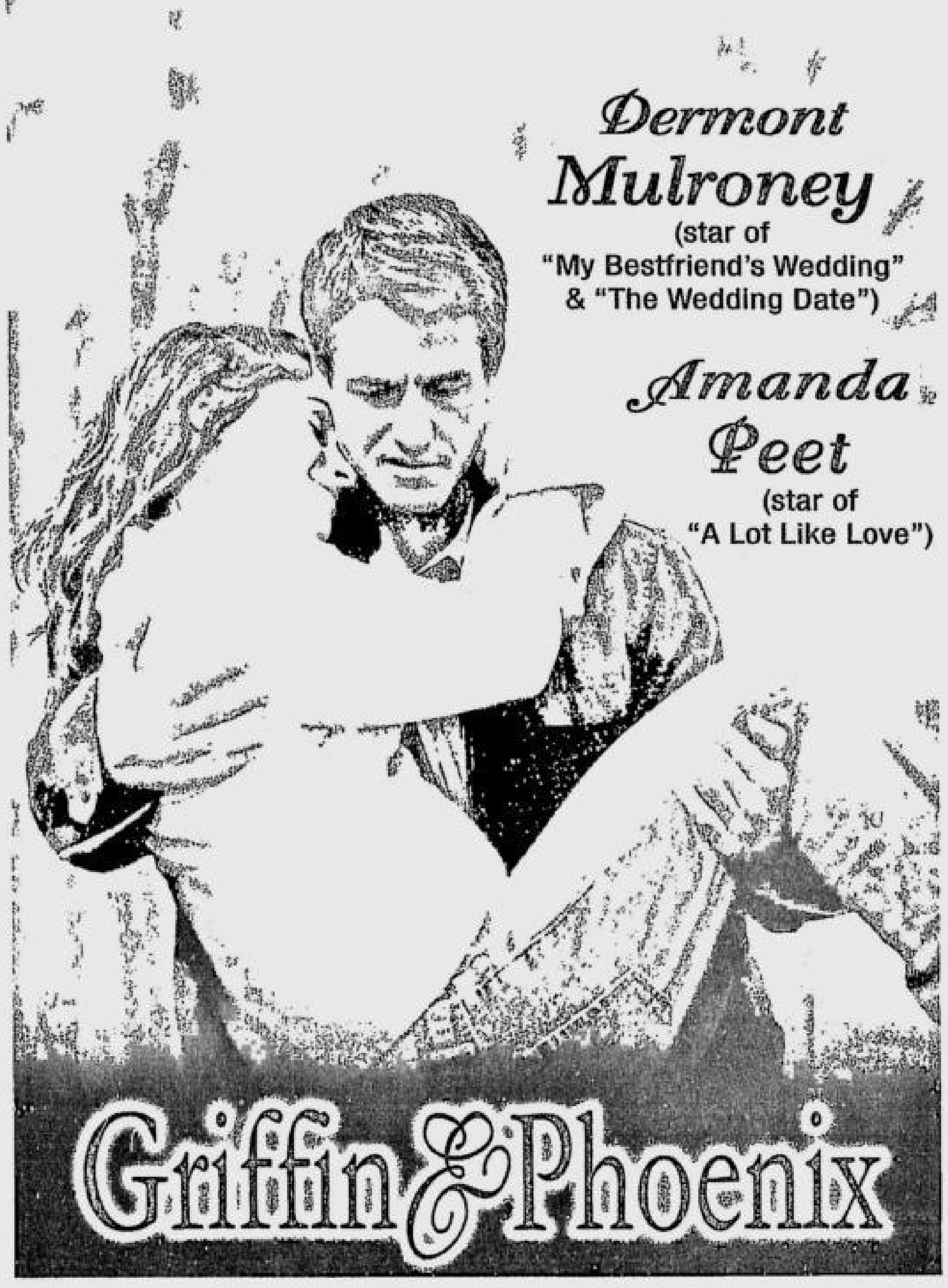

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TATLONG BARAHA 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	MANO PO 5 11:50 / 2:20 / 4:50 / 7:20 / 9:50	MATAKOT KA SA KARMA 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	MANO PO 5 1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00

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KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05	ENTENG KABISOTE 3 11:10 R3 / 1:00 / 3:30 / 6:00 / 8:30	ZSA ZSA ZATURNAH 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35
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Eula Valdez, dragon lady

She also loves swords, comic books, and Jim Morrison

By Marinel R. Cruz

PHOTOS BY AUGUST DELA CRUZ

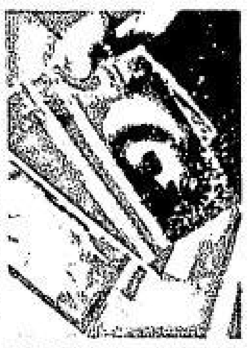
OUT OF THE CLOSET

"KEEPING THE CHILD IN ME ALIVE helps me cope with problems," said actress Eula Valdez, denying rumors that she and husband Richard Litonjua had split up after three years.

"I treat life as one big game," Eula told Living Stars in a recent interview in Quezon City. "I try to enjoy it as much as I can."

While she is still known as the vicious Amor Powers in the defunct soap "Pangako Sa 'Yo," Eula said she is actually "childlike and crazy, but not in a scary kind of way."

She confessed to being "a dreamer, a believer in mythical beings ... fascinated with Dragonology and obsessed with collecting swords and toys."


SOME of her beloved comic books

She said she hoped to someday build a storage room for her collections. "But I have to renovate the house," added the mother of two—Miguel, 12, and Juliana, 2. "We should have an attic. I have so much stuff!"

BOOKS

The Secret Language of Birthdays: Personology Profiles for Each Day of the Year" by Gary Goldschneider and Joost Elffers helps me deal with people. I ask about their birthdays and read about their personalities in this book.

I'm fascinated with dragons. I own a couple of reading materials on Dragonology. I'm one of those people who believe those mythical beings really existed.

I keep "Zsa Zsa Zaturnnah" comic books because I played the lead role in its stage play version at the CCP. One of the books was given to me by the author, Carlo Vergara. But my most treasured comic books are those of the character Electra. Jennifer Garner's portrayal of the role in the film is very different from the comic book character. Electra has a violent nature. She's kind of deranged.

There was a time when I collected comic books on the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." Back in high school, I found it really cool that there were turtles that fought like ninjas.

SWORDS, DAGGERS

My latest purchase is the Achilles sword, a copy of the one Brad Pitt used in "Troy." I also have a replica of the sword of Conan the Barbarian. To own a St. Michael sword is my utimate dream. *Sobrang ganda n'un.* I'm saving up for it.

THE PAIR of Elektra Sai daggers, gifts from a friend

When my husband found out about my interest in "Electra" when he was still courting me, he gifted me with this pair of Electra's Sai (shows a pair of daggers both with two long projections or "tsuba" on the handles). It's kind of heavy. I use this instead of dumbbells when I work out. I have another Electra sword, which I only bought on-line.

My husband's Australian friend stayed in our house for a while. When he learned of my interest in swords, he gifted me with this one (shows a miniature sword with the "Lord of the Rings" logo). This is a replica of the sword of Aragorn, king of Gondor.

My son and I love this "Star Wars" light saber. The lights on ordinary "Star Wars" swords turn on all at the same time. If you look at this one closely, *parang gumagapang ang* light. This looks so much like the light sabers in the movie.

A fan who's now based in the United States, gave me a sword, too. I don't know of its origin, but I was impressed with its intricate design. It's a little blunt, but I think I can have it sharpened.

My "Daywalker" sword is the really sharp one. I actually tried to cut something with this. It comes with a sling—like the ones Wesley Snipes used in the film, "Blade."

I'm saving up for a "Highlander" sword. Its handle is made of ivory—which is the only reason I'm having second thoughts. It means elephants are killed to make them.

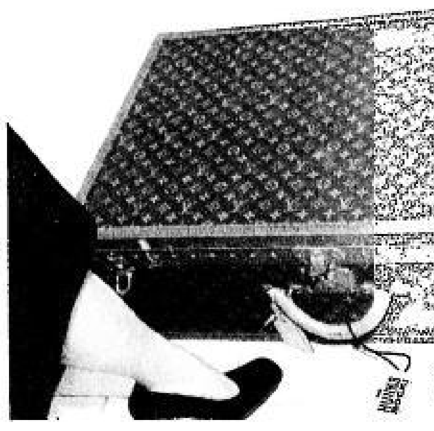
COMIC BOOKS

I've been collecting comic books since

EULA/ F4

HER "perfect" motorcycle jacket is best worn with gloves, according to Eula.

EULA shows off a Dragonology book. "I really believe dragons existed," she says.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Eula Valdez, dragon lady

From page F3

1988, mostly of "Electra," "Ahnk" and "Shaman's Tears." I also have a couple of "Superman" editions—when DC Comics changed his looks, and when he died.

I have some of (graphic novelist) Neil Gaiman's works. Too bad I missed him when he visited the Philippines.

Aside from the standard "Electra" stuff, I also have "Electra Assassin" in hard cover. But the paperbacks have more value than hard-bound copies. I'm fascinated with the beliefs and traditions of American Indians; that's why I collect "Shaman's Tears." Someone told me that I was a male warrior in a past life. I remember when I was little and would always tell my mom, "I want to be a knight." She would answer, "You can't, honey, you're a girl. Besides, we live in the Philippines."

MUSIC SOUVENIRS

I've had a crush on Jim Morrison since I was a child. Too bad he died young. He's so good-looking, and he is also a brilliant musician. I am attracted to guys like him who seem to have a dark side. I have books about his life, his writings and pictures, and lyrics of songs he composed.

I'm also a fan of Madonna's (shows books on the singer, including "Madonna" by Andrew Norton). I admit she's not a great singer but people are drawn to her. She's an icon.

JACKETS

This jacket is perfect when you're driving a motorcycle or a top-down car (shows leather piece in maroon with gold buttons). It looks great when worn with gloves.

I've had this military jacket (with a London Jack patch) from Replay since 2002, but people got to like this style only recently. *Ang cool n'ya!* This reminds me of the Beatles—the Sgt. Pepper's (Lonely Hearts Club Band) look with a modern touch. I think Paul McCartney owns something similar.

This Mango black pea coat is perfect for attending premieres and awards shows on rainy evenings. Sometimes, I imagine myself going in a black tinted car and I feel like I'm in one of the scenes of "The Godfather."

This (shows an embroidered velvet Armani jacket) makes me feel like I'm a Romanov or a member of the Russian Army!

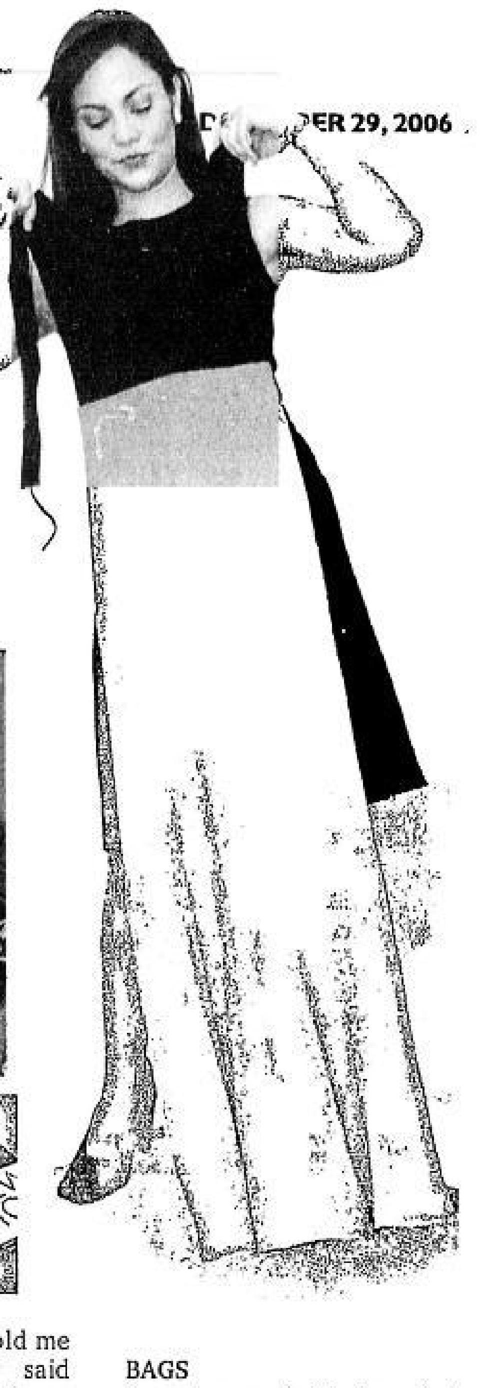
GOWNS

This blue-violet gown doesn't fit me anymore. Its waistline is only 23. This is perfect with a chandelier necklace. It makes you feel like a member of the English royal family. It has a train in just the right length. Designer Pepsi Herrera made this for me to wear in "Pangako Sa 'Yo."

I wore this Pepsi Herrera piece when I attended one of the Star Awards ceremonies. I was vacationing in Australia when ABS-CBN people told me to return home. They said there's a big chance I'd win an award. I wasn't prepared for it. From the airport, I went straight to the UP Theaterwearing only a pair of low-waist leather pants, a sleeveless shirt and biker boots. I rushed backstage and saw Pepsi there holding up this gown. We didn't even meet earlier to have this gown fitted. Pepsi has a mannequin at his store that's exactly my size.

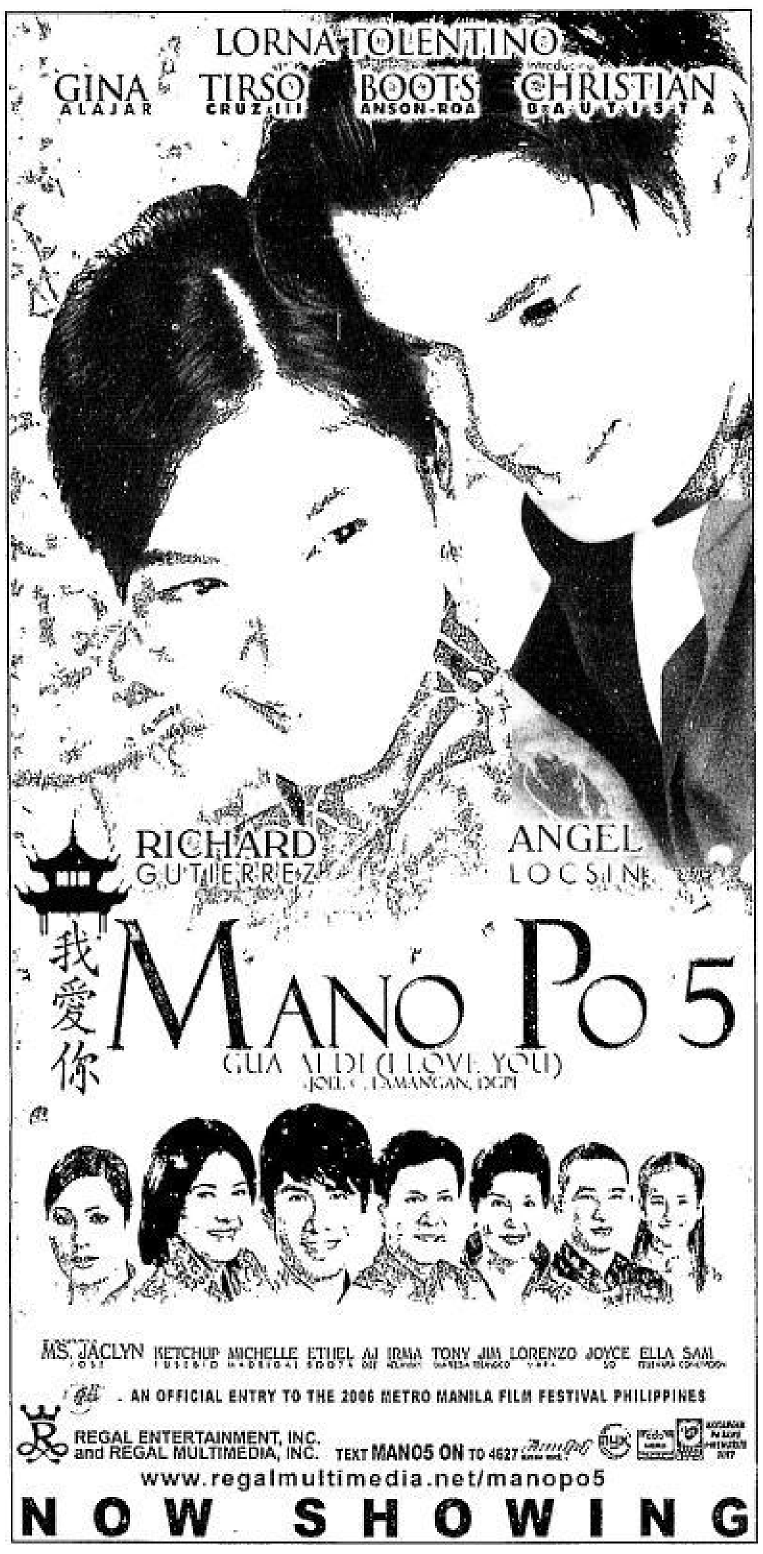
BAGS

I'm not so much into bags, but this Louis Vuitton suitcase is special to me. I got this at a really reasonable price. It's vintage; it looks like it was created during the time of the "Titanic." I've had this for almost 10 years now. Owning an LV bag really helps especially when you travel to places where there's racial discrimination. I make sure to really dress well in those places. Having designer stuff helps, too.



THE DOORS
JIM MORRISON
madonna
ANDREW MORTO

THE MEMORABLE Star Awards gown (right) and (below) reading materials on icons Jim Morrison and Madonna.


LORNA TOLENTINO
GINA ALAJAR
TIRSO CRUZ III
BOOTS ANSON-ROA
introducing CHRISTIAN BAUTISTA
RICHARD GUTIERREZ
ANGEL LOCSIN
我愛你
MANO PO 5
GUA AI DI (I LOVE YOU)
JOEL C. LAMANGAN, DGPI
MS. JACLYN JOSE
KETCHUP EUSEBIO
MICHELLE MADRIGAL
ETHEL BOOBA
AJ DEE
IRMA ADLAWAN
TONY MABESA
JIM PEBANCO
LORENZO MARA
JOYCE SO
ELLA GUEVARA
SAM CONCEPCION
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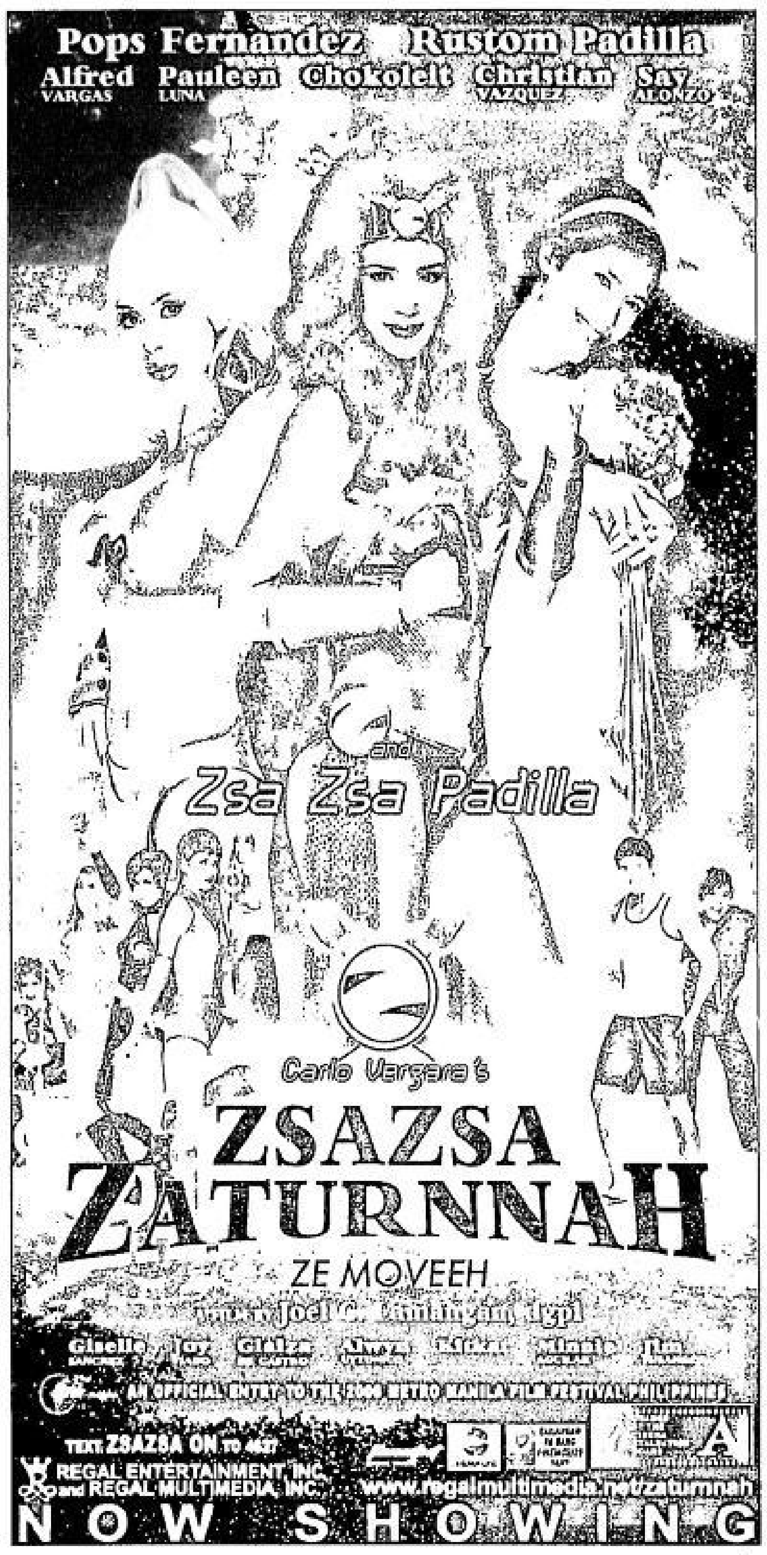
Pops Fernandez
Rustom Padilla
Alfred VARGAS
Pauleen LUNA
Chokoleit
Christian VAZQUEZ
Say ALONZO
and
Zsa Zsa Padilla
Carlo Vergara's
ZSAZSA ZATURNNAH
ZE MOVEEH
Joel C. Lamangan, dgpi
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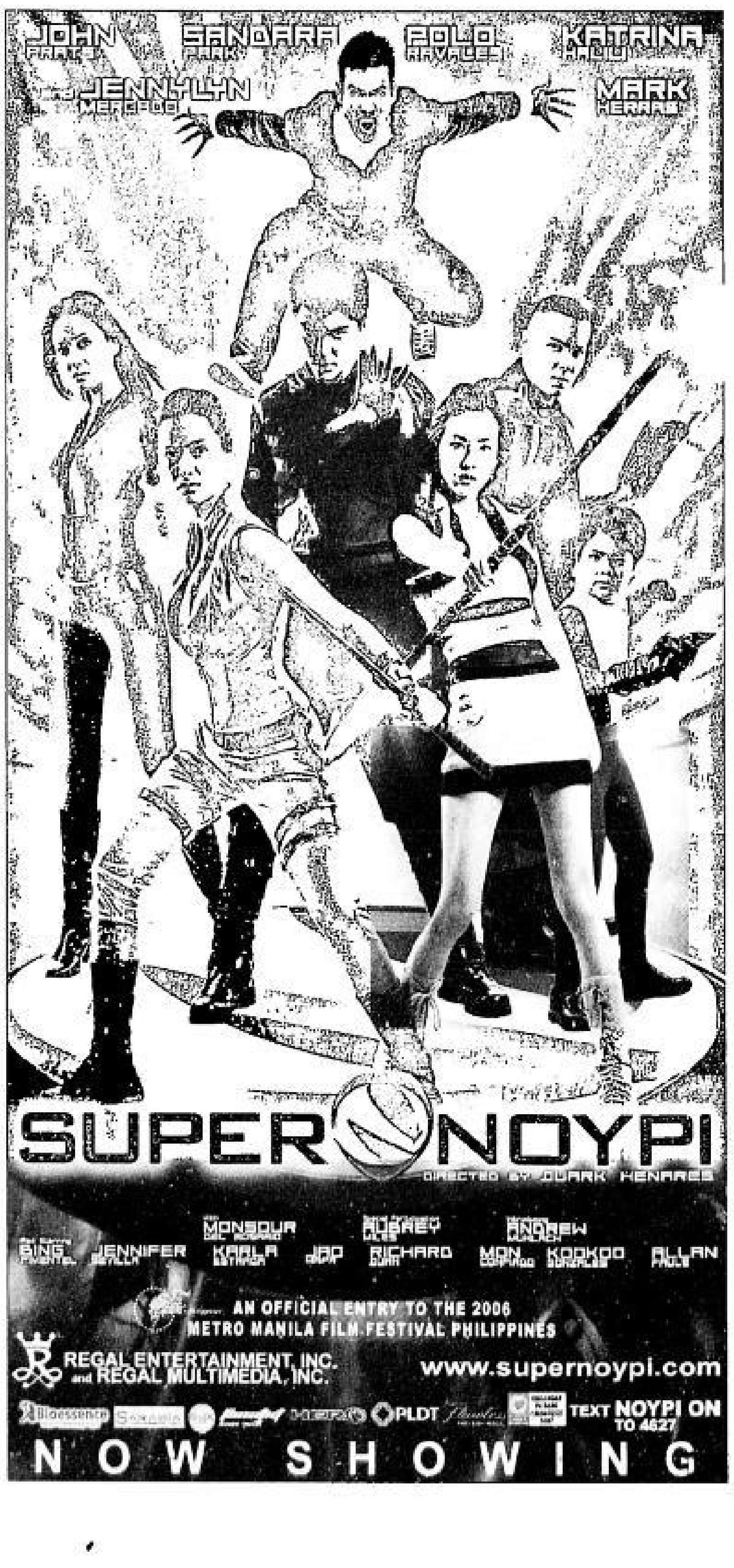
JOHN PRATS
SANDARA PARK
POLO RAVALES
KATRINA HALILI
JENNYLYN MERCADO
MARK HERRAS
SUPER NOYPI
DIRECTED BY QUARK HENARES
MONSOUR DEL ROSARIO
AUBREY MILES
ANDREW WUNDLACH
BING PIMENTEL
JENNIFER SEVILLA
KARLA ESTRADA
JAO MAPA
RICHARD QUAN
MON CONFIADO
KOOKOO GONZALES
ALLAN PAULE
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SHERYL CRUZ
MANILYN REYNES
KEEMPEE DE LEON
IZA CALZADO
BEARWIN MEILY
KEANNA REEVES
TJ TRINIDAD
NASH AGUAS
EUGENE DOMINGO
ROXANNE GUINOO
JOSEPH BITANGCOL
MIKO PALANCA
SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 8
DIRECTED BY RAHYAN CARLOS
MICHAEL TUVIERA
TOPEL LEE
AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2006 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL PHILIPPINES
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B
PG-13
www.regalmultimedia.net/shakerattleandroll8
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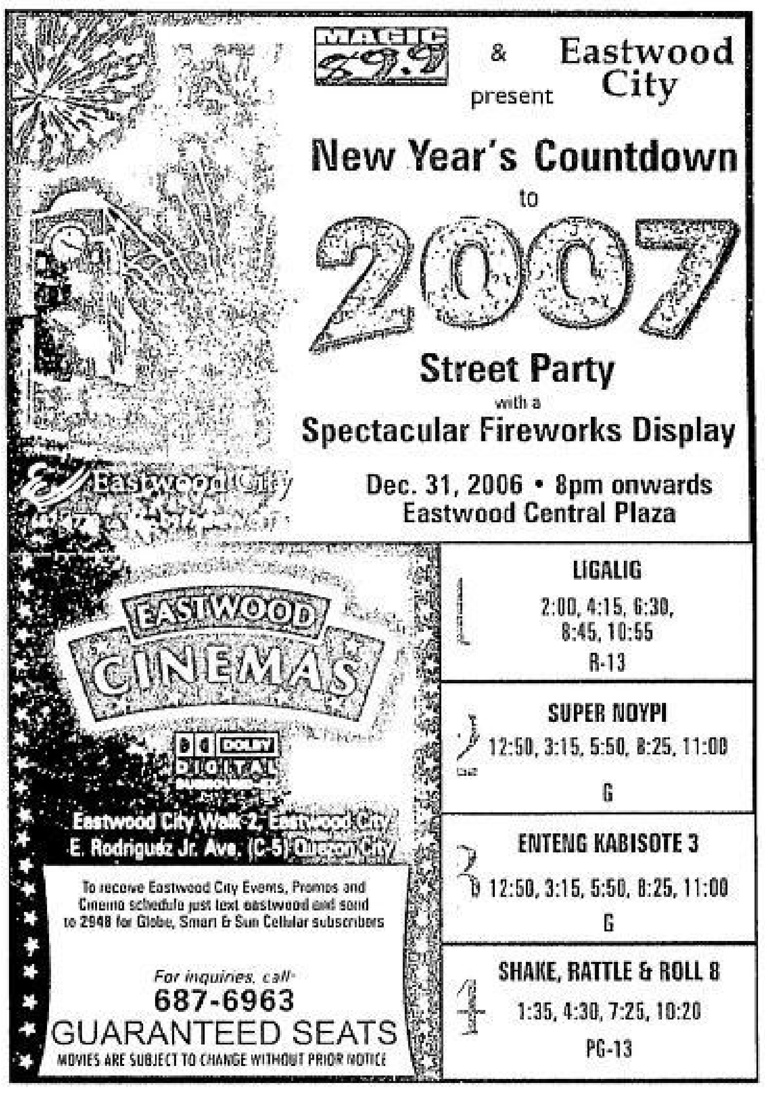
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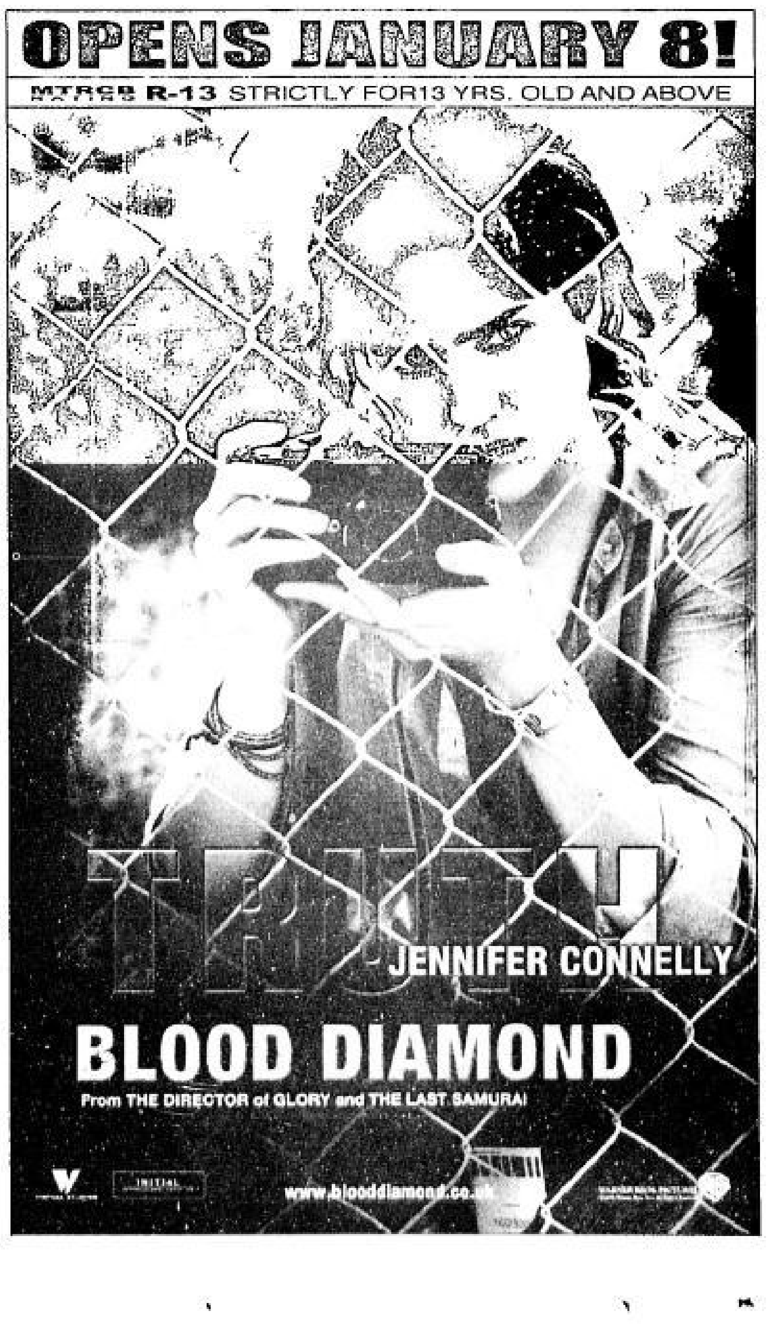
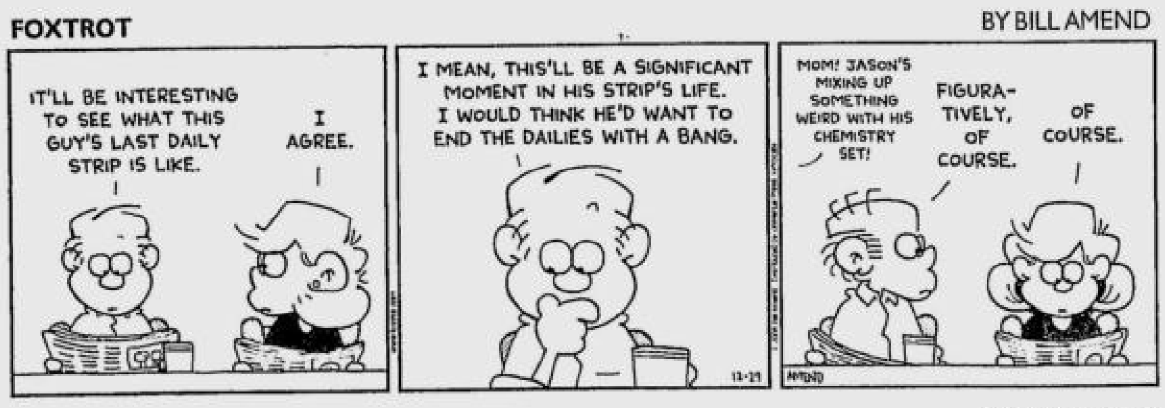
For inquiries, call: 687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	LIGALIG 2:00, 4:15, 6:30, 8:45, 10:55 R-13
2	SUPER NOYPI 12:50, 3:15, 5:50, 8:25, 11:00 G
3	ENTENG KABISOTE 3 12:50, 3:15, 5:50, 8:25, 11:00 G
4	SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8 1:35, 4:30, 7:25, 10:20 PG-13


OPENS JANUARY 8!
MTRCB R-13 STRICTLY FOR13 YRS. OLD AND ABOVE
JENNIFER CONNELLY
BLOOD DIAMOND
From THE DIRECTOR of GLORY and THE LAST SAMURAI
www.blooddiamond.co.uk

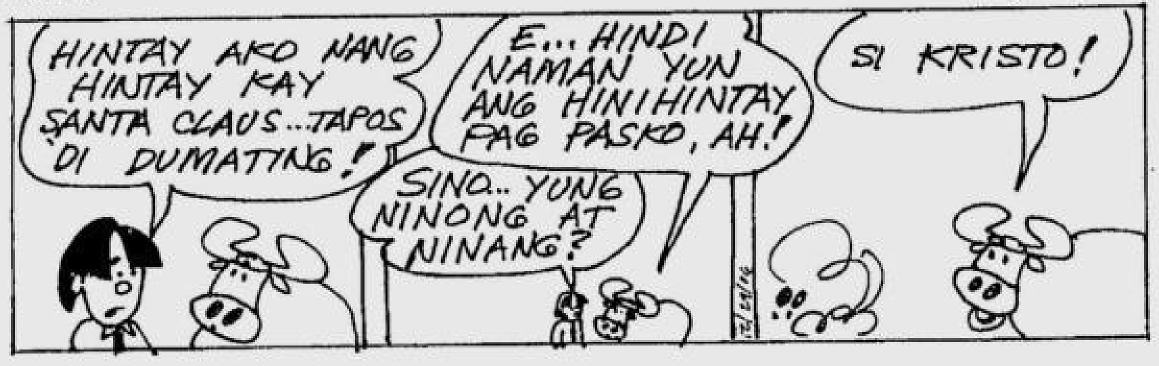
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT THIS GUY'S LAST DAILY STRIP IS LIKE.
I AGREE.
I MEAN, THIS'LL BE A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN HIS STRIP'S LIFE. I WOULD THINK HE'D WANT TO END THE DAILIES WITH A BANG.
12-29
MOM! JASON'S MIXING UP SOMETHING WEIRD WITH HIS CHEMISTRY SET!
FIGURATIVELY, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE.
AMEND

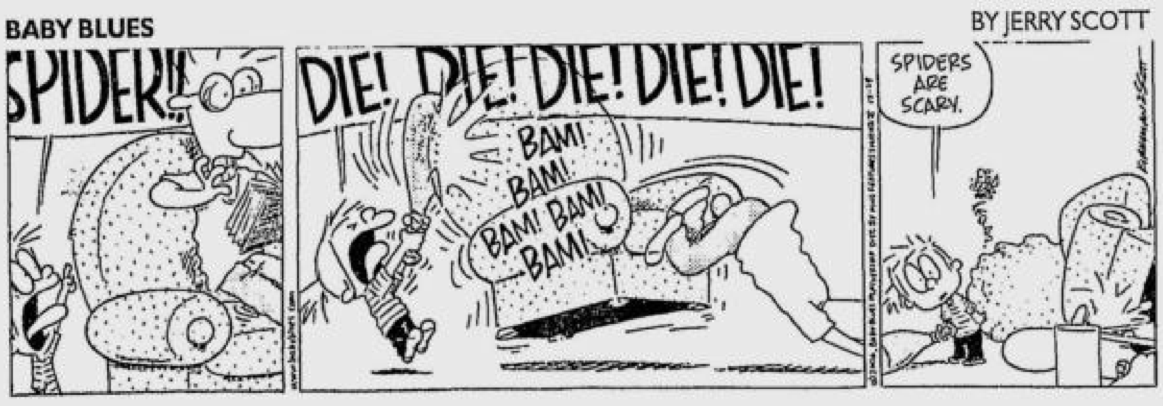
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HINTAY AKO NANG HINTAY KAY SANTA CLAUS...TAPOS 'DI DUMATING!
E... HINDI NAMAN YUN ANG HINIHINTAY PAG PASKO, AH!
SINO.. YUNG NINONG AT NINANG?
SI KRISTO!
12.29.06

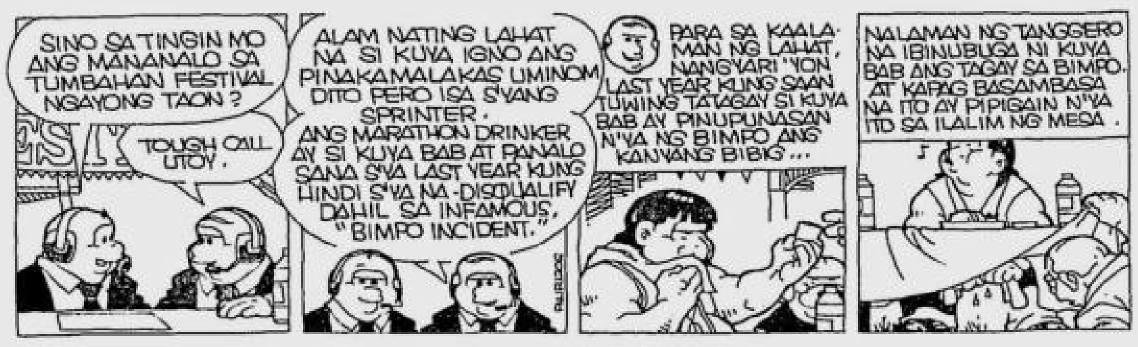
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SPIDER!!
DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!
BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!
SPIDERS ARE SCARY.

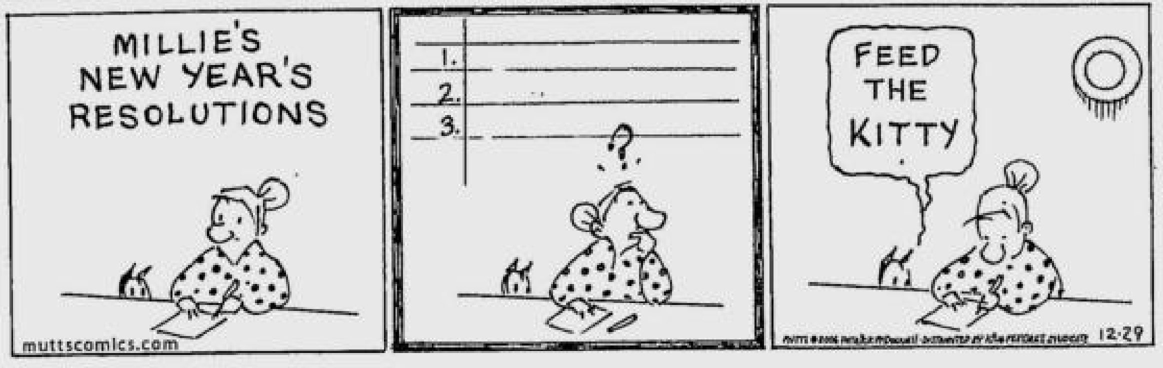
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


SINO SA TINGIN MO ANG MANANALO SA TUMBAHAN FESTIVAL NGAYONG TAON?
TOUGH CALL UTOY.
ALAM NATING LAHAT NA SI KUYA IGNO ANG PINAKAMALAKAS UMINOM DITO PERO ISA S'YANG SPRINTER. ANG MARATHON DRINKER AY SI KUYA BAB AT PANALO SANA S'YA LAST YEAR KUNG HINDI S'YA NA-DISQUALIFY DAHIL SA INFAMOUS "BIMPO INCIDENT."
PARA SA KAALAMAN NG LAHAT, NANGYARI 'YON LAST YEAR KUNG SAAN TUWING TATAGAY SI KUYA BAB AY PINUPUNASAN N'YA NG BIMPO ANG KANYANG BIBIG...
NALAMAN NG TANGGERO NA IBINUBUGA NI KUYA BAB ANG TAGAY SA BIMPO. AT KAPAG BASAMBASA NA ITO AY PIPIGAIN N'YA ITO SA ILALIM NG MESA.

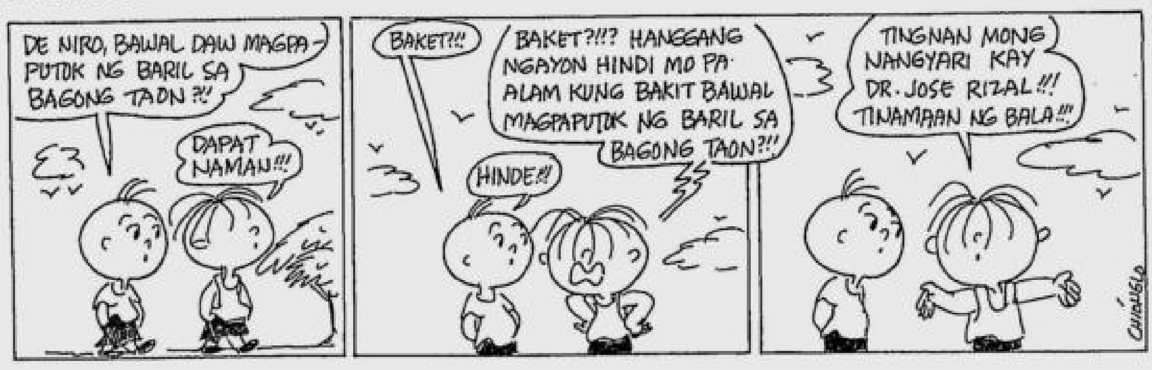
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MILLIE'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
muttscomics.com
1.
2.
3.
?
FEED THE KITTY
12-29

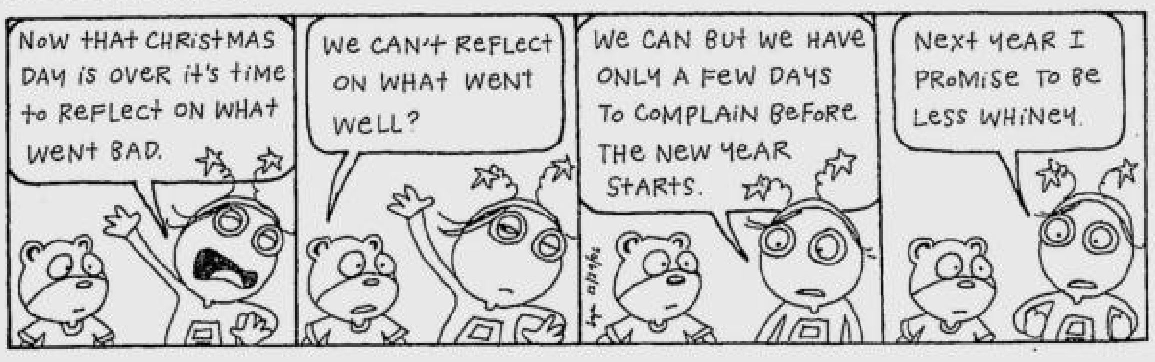
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DE NIRO, BAWAL DAW MAGPAPUTOK NG BARIL SA BAGONG TAON?!
DAPAT NAMAN!!!
BAKET?!!
BAKET?!!? HANGGANG NGAYON HINDI MO PA ALAM KUNG BAKIT BAWAL MAGPAPUTOK NG BARIL SA BAGONG TAON?!!
HINDE!!
TINGNAN MONG NANGYARI KAY DR. JOSE RIZAL!!! TINAMAAN NG BALA!!!
CHIONGLO

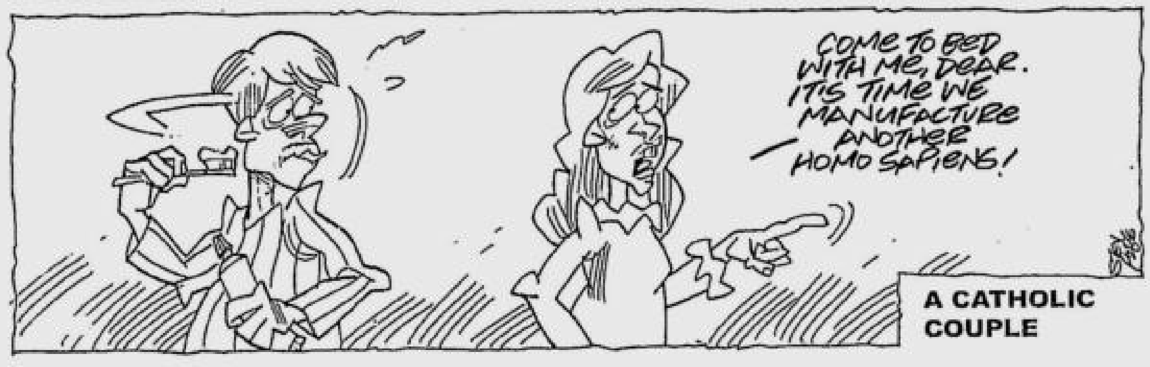
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Now that Christmas Day is over it's time to reflect on what went bad.
We can't reflect on what went well?
We can but we have only a few days to complain before the New Year starts.
Next year I promise to be less whiney.

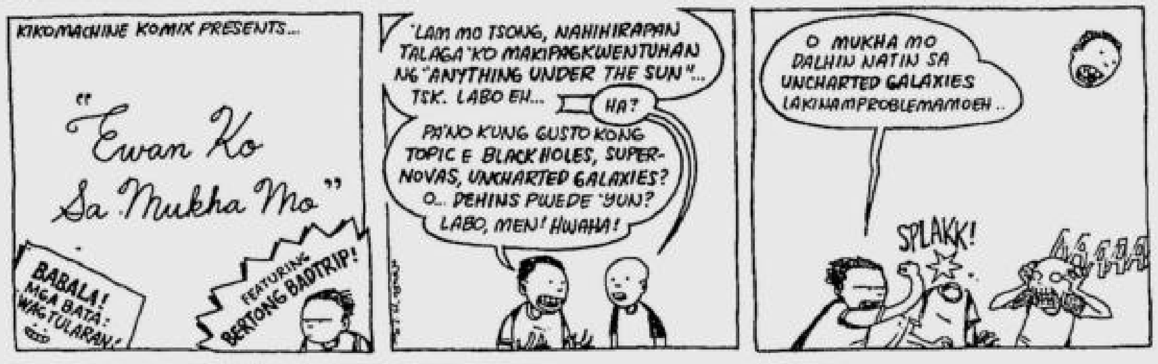
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


COME TO BED WITH ME, DEAR. IT'S TIME WE MANUFACTURE ANOTHER HOMO SAPIENS!
A CATHOLIC COUPLE

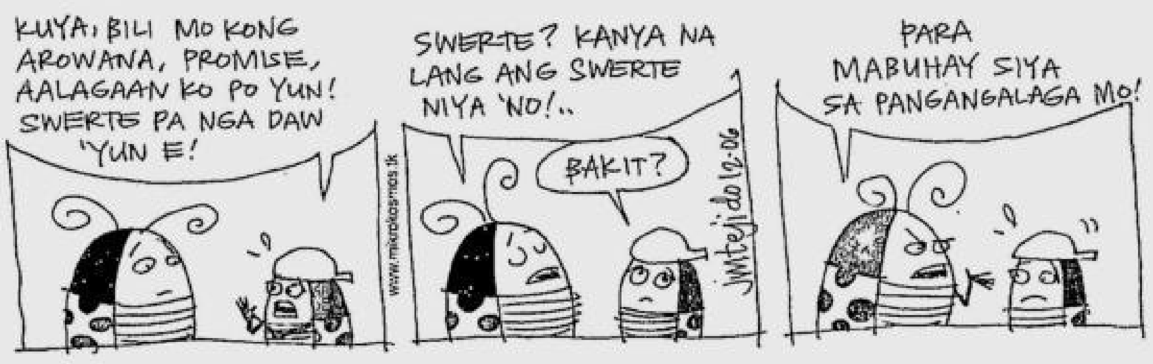
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


KIKOMACHINE KOMIX PRESENTS...
"Ewan Ko Sa Mukha Mo"
BABALA! MGA BATA: WAG TULARAN!
FEATURING BERTONG BADTRIP!
'LAM MO TSONG, NAHIHIRAPAN TALAGA 'KO MAKIPAGKWENTUHAN NG "ANYTHING UNDER THE SUN"... TSK. LABO EH...
HA?
PA'NO KUNG GUSTO KONG TOPIC E BLACK HOLES, SUPERNOVAS, UNCHARTED GALAXIES? O... DEHINS PWEDE 'YUN? LABO, MEN! HWAHA!
O MUKHA MO DALHIN NATIN SA UNCHARTED GALAXIES LAKINAMPROBLEMAMOEH...
SPLAKK!

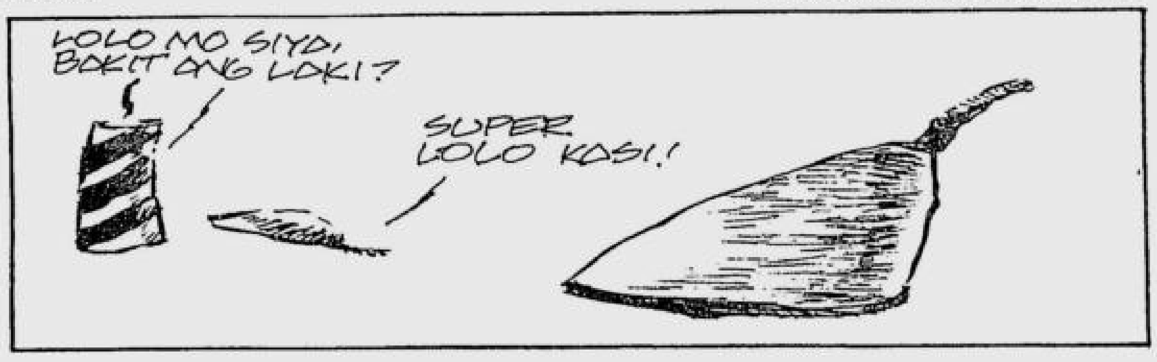
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KUYA, BILI MO KONG AROWANA, PROMISE, AALAGAAN KO PO YUN! SWERTE PA NGA DAW 'YUN E!
www.mikrokosmos.tk
SWERTE? KANYA NA LANG ANG SWERTE NIYA 'NO!..
BAKIT?
JMTejido 12-06
PARA MABUHAY SIYA SA PANGANGALAGA MO!

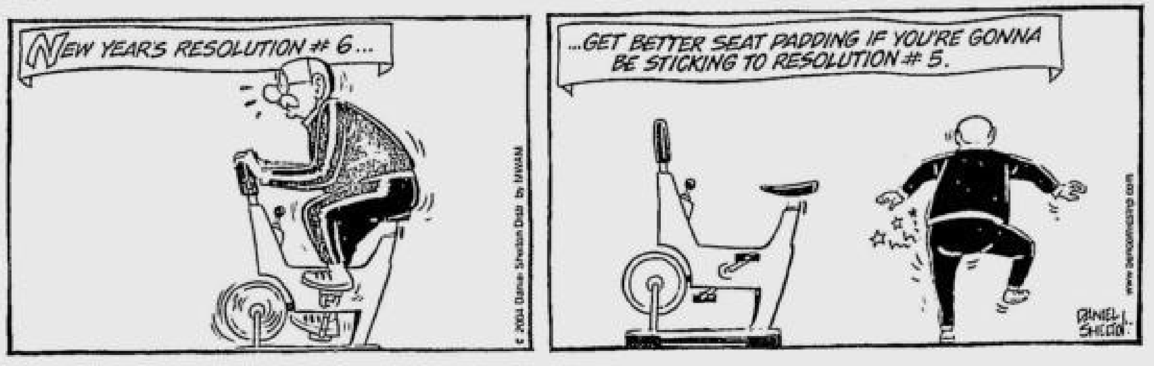
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

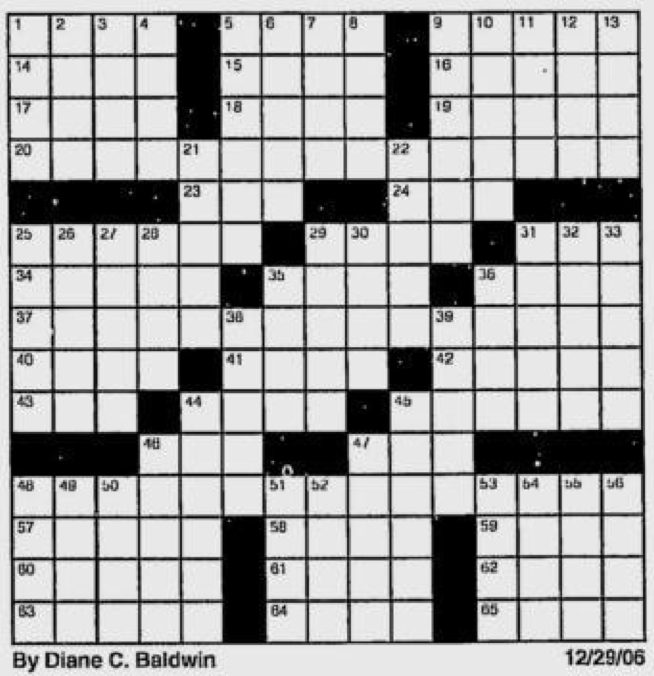

LOLO MO SIYA, BAKIT ANG LAKI?
SUPER LOLO KASI!

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION # 6...
...GET BETTER SEAT PADDING IF YOU'RE GONNA BE STICKING TO RESOLUTION # 5.
DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

12/29/06

ACROSS

1 Hula-Hoop activator
5 Tap trouble
9 Crescent moon features
14 Mental spark
15 Derby contest
16 Waiting in the wings
17 Adversaries
18 Uses a brayer
19 Blaze up
20 "___," he said hotly
23 Sheltered side
24 Firmed up
25 Empty talk
29 Be sore
31 To's companion
34 Sour tasting, old-style
35 Up to the job
36 Force into a corner
37 "___," she said bluntly
40 Gets off track
41 Hand over
42 Memorable saying
43 Susan of "L.A. Law"
44 Therapeutic amount
45 Sawed wood
46 Part of the family
47 Floral loop
48 "___," they said flatly.
57 Mindful
58 Pop flavor
59 Reproduced
60 Agreement's conditions
61 Decisive defeat
62 Venerable
63 Halloween handout
64 Ultimatum word
65 Depend (on)

DOWN

1 Old audio system
2 False god
3 Orange cover
4 Waist girder
5 Club for Tiger
6 Indian princess
7 Yucky
8 Cozumel cash
9 Java
10 Dark
11 Rigel or Deneb
12 Whittle down
13 Went quickly
21 Defendant's story
22 Wedding party member
25 Turned left
26 Earthy pigment
27 About to bawl
28 Word with liberal or fine
29 Dwelling place
30 Colonel Mustard's game
31 Robin Hood's Tuck
32 Chain of mountains
33 Expressed a preference
35 Voice votes
36 Busy one's list
38 Teatime treat
39 Freak out
44 Dispossess
45 Lawmaking body
46 Destiny
47 Humdingers
48 Light bulb power unit
49 Water pitcher
50 Wonderland creature
51 Farmland unit
52 Common fund
53 Gondola alternative
54 Driving force
55 Stagger
56 Small whirlpool

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

P	E	T		R	I	S	K	S		M	S	N	B	C
R	N	S		E	N	N	U	I		A	H	E	A	D
I	T	H	I	N	K	I	A	M		R	I	T	A	S
C	H	I	N		S	P	L	O	T	C	H			
K	U	R	T	S			A	N	A			O	T	B
E	S	T	U	A	R	Y		S	T	E	E	R	E	R
D	E	S	I	S	T	E	D			R	Y	D	E	R
			T	H	E	R	E	F	O	R	E			
D	O	N	E	E			M	O	N	I	T	O	R	S
R	E	A	D	S	U	P		B	O	N	E	S	E	T
U	R	N			A	L	S			G	E	T	T	O
			P	A	R	A	P	E	T		T	R	I	O
D	I	N	A	H		I	A	M	I	T	H	I	N	K
P	R	I	S	M		T	R	I	N	I		C	U	E
I	R	A	T	E		S	E	T	T	O		H	E	Y

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12/28/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You play a leading role wherever you are, whether you want to or not. Ironically, you don't seek out power—it just comes to you. You have a dry sense of humor. You also have excellent communication skills, which makes you seem very direct at times! (Oops.) This next year could involve some major changes, perhaps as significant as around 1998.

Birthdate of: Ted Danson, actor; Mary Tyler Moore, actress; Patricia Clarkson, actress

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You seem to identify strongly with your possessions today. In fact, you might want to show something off. (That's why you're not willing to part with something if anyone asks you.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): With the Moon in your sign today, you feel a greater need to belong to or relate to friends and loved ones. Your emotional antennas are out there in full force!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today you might feel tempted to withdraw from others. You need a bit of solitude or quiet time just to be on your own. (It's quite all right if you don't feel like socializing.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You feel protective toward a friend today. Alternately, you might attract someone who feels nurturing or protective toward you. (It's the placement of the Moon.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a good day to focus on professional or business concerns. You're also very aware of your reputation among your peers. You want to know what other people are thinking about you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Try to do something different and out of the ordinary today. Break away from your daily routine. You want adventure, and you want to learn something new!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your emotional reaction to practically everything will be more intense today. Don't worry about this. It's perfectly normal.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Partnerships and close friendships are very important to you today. That's because the Moon is directly opposite your sign.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good day to shop at pharmacies and get all kinds of sundry items or things related to personal care, hygiene and even small pets.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You can't hide your feelings from others today. That's OK. You need to be yourself, and you need to feel free to express who you are.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Many of you will want to hide out at home today and just hunker down in front of the TV with some junk food. You need some comfort from the demands of the busy, hectic outside world.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): In conversations with others today, you want to get down to the nitty-gritty of things. You need to talk to others at a gut level.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

8	6							9
2	4		8				6	
					7	3		
	9				8	5		
		8	5				7	
		6	7					
	1				3		2	8
9							1	6

Difficulty Level ★★★★

12/29

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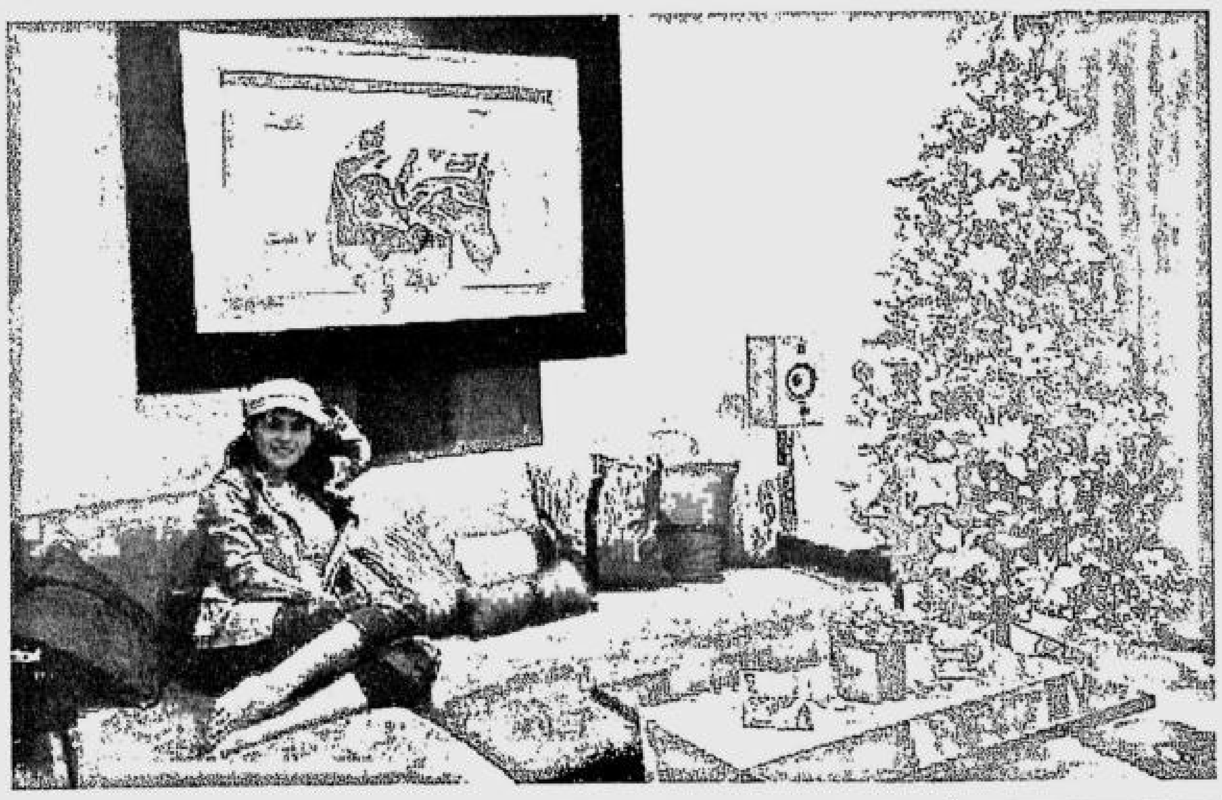
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	5	9	7	6	1	4	8	2
7	1	4	2	8	3	5	6	9
6	8	2	5	4	9	3	7	1
2	6	1	4	7	5	8	9	3
4	9	8	6	3	2	1	5	7
5	7	3	9	1	8	6	2	4
8	2	5	3	9	4	7	1	6
9	4	6	1	5	7	2	3	8
1	3	7	8	2	6	9	4	5

Difficulty Level ★★★



FAVORITE NOOKS

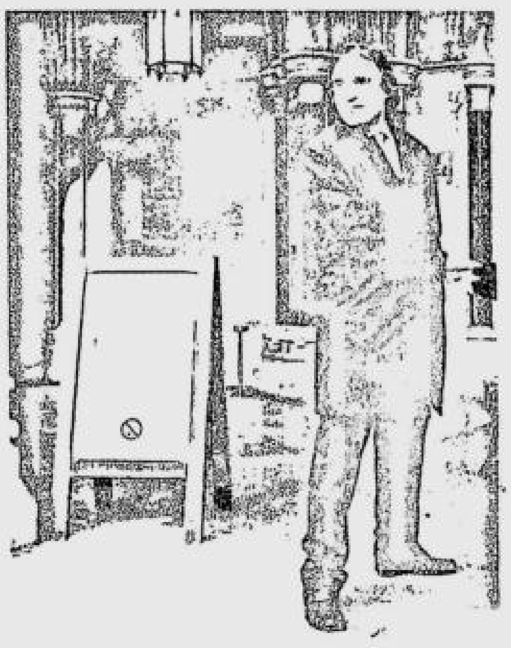
VINA MORALES

I LOVE OUR LIVING ROOM, WHERE I HANG out with family and friends. The room was given a makeover on Charlene Gonzales' ABS-CBN show "At Home Ka Dito" when I was promoting my 20th anniversary concert, "Showgirl." The TV show's staff surprised me. Good thing, I loved their new design concept which was inspired by the musical "Moulin Rouge" and sported the colors bloody red, burgundy, black, silver, gray and white. I had the gray couch and center table custom-made. But the centerpiece—the leather mask that I bought in Barcelona, Spain—was framed by designer Janet Torio of Charlene's show. Lastly, the Christmas tree is a gift from my boyfriend. After the holidays, I'll put back the "Moulin Rouge" lamp where the tree now stands.

Bayani San Diego Jr.

Why Christmas was truly merry for these stars

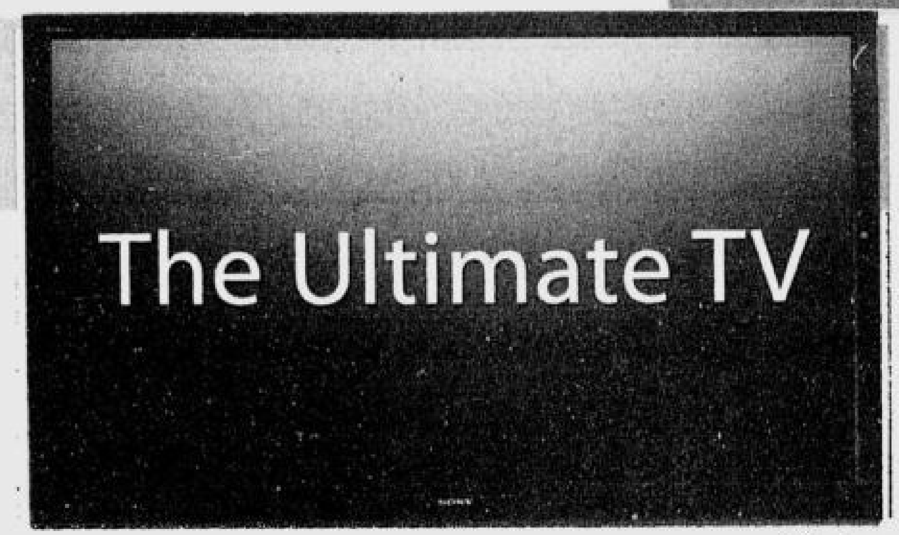
PENELOPE Cruz with Fluby, Expo Zaragoza 2008 mascot, after being cited by the city of Zaragoza in her native Spain on Dec. 22 for her voluntary support to the expo. REUTERS



MATTHEW Fisher, organist of the 1960s British pop group "Procol Harum," won on Dec. 20 his royalty battle for copyright half-sharing over the 1967 hit "Whiter Shade of Pale" against the group's singer Gary Brooker, who claimed he was its sole writer. The High Court in London awarded Fisher, 60, 40 percent of royalties. The song sold 10 million copies worldwide and has been voted one of the greatest pop songs of all time. Fisher's back royalties are valued at around one million pounds ($1.97 million). AFP

DIRECTOR Gary Marshall and actress Jane Fonda celebrate Fonda's birthday, Dec. 21, on the set of "Georgia Rule" at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles, California. AFP

CAROL Burnett at the Pacific Hollywood Theater in Hollywood on Dec. 21. Burnett worked as an usherette at the theater in 1951, and after refusing to seat a couple during the last 10 minutes of a thriller movie, was fired. As Burnett's fame grew, she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, which she asked be placed in front of the theater. This year, theater officials presented Burnett with this door (in photo) from the building as a Christmas gift. REUTERS



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